THE MBA HANDBOOK

NINTH EDITION

Pearson

SHEILA CAMERON

THE MBA HANDBOOK

Pearson

At Pearson, we have a simple mission: to help people make more of their lives through learning.

We combine innovative learning technology with trusted content and educational expertise to provide engaging and effective learning experiences that serve people wherever and whenever they are learning.

From classroom to boardroom, our curriculum materials, digital learning tools and testing programmes help to educate millions of people worldwide – more than any other private enterprise.

Every day our work helps learning flourish, and wherever learning flourishes, so do people.

To learn more, please visit us at **www.pearson.com/uk**

THE MBA HANDBOOK

Academic and professional skills for mastering management

Ninth Edition

SHEILA CAMERON
The Open University Business School

Pearson

Harlow, England • London • New York • Boston • San Francisco • Toronto • Sydney • Dubai • Singapore • Hong Kong
Tokyo • Seoul • Taipei • New Delhi • Cape Town • São Paulo • Mexico City • Madrid • Amsterdam • Munich • Paris • Milan

PEARSON EDUCATION LIMITED
KAO Two
KAO Park
Harlow CM17 9SR
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1279 623623
Web: www.pearson.com/uk

First published 1991 in Great Britain under the Pitman Publishing imprint (print)
Third edition published 1996 (print)
Fourth edition published 2001 (print)
Fifth edition published 2005 (print)
Sixth edition published 2008 (print)
Seventh edition published 2011 (print and electronic)
Eighth edition published 2016 (print and electronic)
Ninth edition published 2021 (print and electronic)

© Sheila Cameron 1991, 1996, 2001, 2005, 2008 (print)
© Sheila Cameron 2011, 2016 (print and electronic)
© Pearson Education Limited 2021 (print and electronic)

The right of Sheila Cameron to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The print publication is protected by copyright. Prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, distribution or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, permission should be obtained from the publisher or, where applicable, a licence permitting restricted copying in the United Kingdom should be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, Barnard's Inn, 86 Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1EN.

The ePublication is protected by copyright and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased, or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author's and the publisher's rights and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

All trademarks used herein are the property of their respective owners. The use of any trademark in this text does not vest in the author or publisher any trademark ownership rights in such trademarks, nor does the use of such trademarks imply any affiliation with or endorsement of this book by such owners.

Pearson Education is not responsible for the content of third-party internet sites.

ISBN: 978-1-292-30429-8 (print)
978-1-292-30430-4 (PDF)
978-1-292-30431-1 (ePub)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for the print edition is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Cameron, Sheila, author.
Title: The MBA handbook : academic and professional skills for mastering management / Sheila Cameron, The Open University Business School.
Description: Ninth edition. | Harlow, United Kingdom : Pearson, 2021.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020041211 (print) | LCCN 2020041212 (ebook) | ISBN 9781292304298 (paperback) | ISBN 9781292304304 (ebook) | ISBN 9781292304311 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Master of business administration degree. | Business education. | Industrial management--Study and teaching (Graduate)
Classification: LCC HF1111 .C27 2021 (print) | LCC HF1111 (ebook) | DDC 650.071/173—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020041211
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020041212

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
25 24 23 22 21

Cartoons by Neill Cameron

Front cover image: NicoElNino/Shutterstock and Robert Kneschke/Shutterstock
Cover designed by Two Associates
Print edition typeset in 9/13pt Stone Serif ITC Pro by Spi Global
Printed in Slovakia by Neografia

NOTE THAT ANY PAGE CROSS REFERENCES REFER TO THE PRINT EDITION

BRIEF CONTENTS

Preface xiv
Acknowledgements xvi
Guided tour xviii

PART 1 UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

1 Orientation to postgraduate management learning and the role of the handbook 4
2 Theory, practice and ethics in management learning 24

PART 2 TRANSFERABLE PERSONAL SKILLS

3 Managing yourself and other stakeholders 50
4 Managing your time 80

PART 3 TRANSFERABLE LEARNING SKILLS

5 Managing your learning 108
6 Professional development 126
7 Critical use of ideas and information 166
8 Diagrams and infographics 194
9 Teamwork, communication and leadership 224
10 Case studies, complexity and consultancy 272
11 Information from numbers 296

PART 4 SKILLS FOR ASSESSMENT

12 Assessment methods, stakeholders and grades 364
13 Writing for business and assessment 384

14 Effective presentations 440
15 Examinations 462

PART 5 COMPLETING YOUR QUALIFICATION AND USING IT

16 Academic and work-based projects and dissertations 482
17 Applying your skills to your career 540

References 551
Online resources 556
Index 560

CONTENTS

Preface xiv
Acknowledgements xvi
Guided tour xviii

PART 1 UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

1 Orientation to postgraduate management learning and the role of the handbook 4

Learning outcomes 5
Introduction 6
Obvious and less obvious challenges of study at this level 6
Engaging with your learning 9
Why this handbook is not a textbook 14
Starting to plan 16
Potential benefits of P/G management study 18
Summary 19
Additional resources 20
Endnote 20
HelpFile 1.1: Diagnosing your learning priorities 21

2 Theory, practice and ethics in management learning 24

Learning outcomes 25
Introduction 26
Educating senior managers – a very short history 26
Challenges to the traditional business education model 28
Knowledge, knowing and learning 30
Managing in a complex, fast-changing world 33
Reflection and professional practice 36
Setting your own learning objectives 39
Revisiting your learning objectives 42
A hierarchy of objectives 44
Summary 45
Additional resources 46

PART 2 TRANSFERABLE PERSONAL SKILLS

3 Managing yourself and other stakeholders 50

Learning outcomes 51
Introduction 52
Systems and stakeholders 52
Assessing your personal management skills 54
Managing your emotions 56
Managing stress 58
Coping with unavoidable stress 61
Developing assertiveness skills 65
Managing organisational stakeholders 71
Managing your relationships with family and friends 74
Managing relationships with your university 76
Managing your emotions 78
Summary 78
Additional resources 78
Endnote 79

4 Managing your time 80

Learning outcomes 81
Introduction 82
Planning skills 83
Control 84
Making time for study 85
If the time simply is not there . . . 90
Basic time management principles 90
Putting principles into practice 101
Summary 103
Additional resources 104

PART 3 TRANSFERABLE LEARNING SKILLS

5 Managing your learning 108

Learning outcomes 109
Introduction 110
Creating an effective work space 110
Developing a study plan 112
If things go wrong 121
Summary 123
Additional resources 123
HelpFile 5.1: Exercises that can be used during study breaks 124

6 Professional development 126

Learning outcomes 127
Introduction 128
What is learning? 128
What is management theory and its uses? 131
Models and metaphors for learning 134
Learning styles 135
Single- and double-loop learning 140
Critical engagement 142
Reflection and professional learning 144
Self-authoring 147
Reflective writing 157
Organising your file 161
Summary 162
Additional resources 163
Endnotes 164

7 Critical use of ideas and information 166

Learning outcomes 167
Introduction 168
Efficient reading 168
Selecting reading material 171
Choosing your reading speed 174
Reading critically 177
Taking notes 184
Academic referencing 188
Summary 190
Additional resources 190
Answers to Exercise 7.1 192

8 Diagrams and infographics 194

Learning outcomes 195
Introduction 196
The importance of infographics 196
The magic management box 201
Brain patterns or mind maps 204
Relationship diagrams 207
Rich pictures 208
Systems maps 211
Multiple-cause (and other causal) diagrams 213
Other diagramming techniques 216
Diagramming hazards 216
Integrating images and words 217

Summary 220
Additional resources 221
Answers to Exercise 8.1 223

9 Teamwork, communication and leadership 224

Learning outcomes 225
Introduction 226
Key communication skills 226
Active listening 232
Talking 236
Dialogue 237
Effective teams 240
Task and process 241
Behaviours seen in groups and teams 242
Choosing team members 247
Team development 249
Practical aspects of team effectiveness 252
The dangers of group work 252
Developing team-working skills 253
Leadership and influencing skills 255
Negotiation skills 257
The role of informal groups 258
Action learning sets 260
Virtual teams 262
Summary 269
Additional resources 270

10 Case studies, complexity and consultancy 272

Learning outcomes 273
Introduction 274
The purpose of case studies 275
Coping with cases 281
A method for approaching cases 282
From cases to consultancy 293
Summary 293
Additional resources 294

11 Information from numbers 296

Learning outcomes 297
Introduction 298
Diagnosing your current skill level 299
Causes of difficulty 301
Descriptive equations 303

Modelling 303
Understanding probability and statistics 304
Making data more meaningful 306
Distributions and histograms 309
Bar and column charts 314
Pie charts 317
Graphs 318
Estimating 327
Rounding 327
Fractions, percentages and ratios 328
Using equations 335
Working with brackets 340
Differential calculus 340
Statistical software 342
Further skills development 343
Summary 343
Additional resources 344
HelpFile 11.1: Cracking the code 345
Answers to exercises 351

PART 4 SKILLS FOR ASSESSMENT

12 Assessment methods, stakeholders and grades 364
Learning outcomes 365
Introduction 366
Common anxieties about assessment 366
Stakeholders in assessment 369
Common causes of failure 376
Assessment as communication 382
Summary 382

13 Writing for business and assessment 384
Learning outcomes 385
Introduction 386
Assignment planning 387
Define or refine structure 393
Developing your material 395
Drafting written assignments 402
Using report format 405
Writing essays 413
Writing within a portfolio 414
Writing clear English 415

Writing for e-reading 420
Summary 422
Additional resources 422
HelpFile 13.1: Glossary of terms used in examination and assessment questions 424
HelpFile 13.2: Spelling (the right word) 428
HelpFile 13.3: Punctuation and grammar 432
HelpFile 13.4: If English is not your native language 436
Answers to exercises 439

14 Effective presentations 440

Learning outcomes 441
Introduction 442
The risks of presenting 443
Structure 445
Delivery technique 446
Visual aids 448
Handling questions 452
Dealing with nerves 453
Preparation 453
Virtual presentations and vodcasts 454
Group presentations 455
Poster presentations 456
Summary 459
Additional resources 460

15 Examinations 462

Learning outcomes 463
Introduction 464
Objectives of different 'examinations' 464
Types of written examination 465
Common causes of failure 467
Exam preparation 471
During the examination 476
Summary 479

PART 5 COMPLETING YOUR QUALIFICATION AND USING IT

16 Academic and work-based projects and dissertations 482

Learning outcomes 483
Introduction 484

Characteristics of management research 485
Stakeholders in your project or dissertation 487
Factors influencing topic choice 492
Generating possible topics 496
Topic selection 502
Responsibilities and ethics 506
Your formal proposal(s) 509
Literature search 511
Primary data collection 515
Focus groups 520
Questionnaires 520
Research methodology and approach 523
Project management 528
Beginning to draft 534
Writing up 536
Summary 538
Additional resources 539
Endnote 539

17 Applying your skills to your career 540

Learning outcomes 541
Introduction 542
Systems, change and lifelong learning 542
Planning and managing your career 544
Developing your 'brand' 545
Networking 546
Summary 550

References 551
Online resources 556
Index 560

PREFACE

This handbook was written out of a sense of frustration that so many students gained so little from their MBA studies despite a huge investment of time and effort. Thirty years of teaching later, the world is very different. Massive globalisation facilitated by the digital explosion, the financial crisis, the pandemic, (slowly) growing recognition of a climate emergency (and much more) have changed the world as we then knew it. There has also been an explosion of post-graduate management qualifications, and the text is relevant whatever MA or MSc course you are on, if it relates in any way to management or business.

It is ever more important that those in business, and taking decisions about business, have the thinking skills that the MBA and similar Master's qualifications have always been intended to develop. The skills to set aside pre-judgements, to judge the value of evidence, to assess priorities and to come up with creative responses to problems. Yet (even more frustratingly) many of the same frustrations remain. A significant proportion of students still waste a huge amount of effort because they lack the skills their course requires, or fail to understand how to apply these skills to achieve academic goals and career-relevant learning. Most of them still gain the qualification (there are powerful pressures on a teaching institution to keep pass rates high). But without the skills the qualification is intended to signify, their careers benefit little, and society benefits not at all.

So the aim of this text has not changed in 30 years, merely become more important: it is to help post-graduate management students to get value from their studies, value for themselves in terms of subsequent life success, for their employers (or themselves again, if they set up their own business) in terms of their contribution to organisational success, and to society more broadly, in terms of their contributions to successful, and socially responsible, organisations.

This text seeks to help students develop the skills and understanding they need in order to learn effectively during their course. Understanding the nature of the learning required, and the reasons for this, is the basis for developing the individual and group learning skills needed. But the text covers a wide range of learning skills that are equally important in post-graduation and for passing a course, as the contents list shows. Team and leadership skills are important for group learning. Written communication and presenting to an audience are skills that are probably even more important in business than they are to students. Evidence-based decisions require the ability to gather and interpret relevant information. Continuing professional development depends on individual and group learning, often through reflection.

The focus of this text is therefore skills that are transferrable. They will improve your grades but, more importantly, these same skills will make you more successful in life after your studies. The potential benefits are huge. But there is a price – to gain these benefits

takes more than merely reading the text. You need to think as you read, to do the activities within the text, and to reflect on, and record, your learning from the activities.

Most of the ideas on which the book is based are early explanations of 'threshold concepts', concepts which will change the way you think for ever. This is not laziness on my part, but because the first explanation of an idea is often the clearest. A good idea can be applied in a much wider range of situations than that from which it was derived. What has changed is the context in which these ideas are applied. Those that are included are as relevant to current contexts as they were to the decade in which they were developed.

Remember, as you work through (rather than merely read) this text that it is a handbook, not a textbook. It is not a summary of the state of knowledge on a topic – you will learn this from your course. Rather, it is a set of guidelines for thinking and action as a student, based on decades of experience as a manager, and management teacher. Judge it on pragmatic grounds, rather than using more conventional academic criteria. Does it help you learn useful things more effectively? While it is academically sound in being based on established theory and evidence, it also includes my own experience over a lifetime of teaching management and evaluating management teaching. I hope the text makes clear which is which.

As a handbook, this text can help almost all management students (a small proportion do not need it as they have the skills already) to get a far better return on their investment in a post-graduate management-related study. Much of the use will be in the first half year or so of study, with reference back to key points later on as necessary. The rest will be towards the end of your course, with its challenges of carrying out a research-based project or dissertation, and the even bigger challenge of finding a job that will exploit newly developed skills.

Enjoy your studies, and the rest of your working life!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This text could not have been written without the tolerance of (and, decades later, inputs from) my children, or without the learning I have shared with hundreds of Open University students over so many years, and with colleagues in other universities where I have been external examiner. Thanks are also due to Penelope Woolfe, who, as my first and never surpassed editor, supported me through the first edition, and to all the other editors and reviewers who have contributed to a book that has, I hope, continued to evolve and improve over the years.

Sheila Cameron

Publisher's acknowledgements

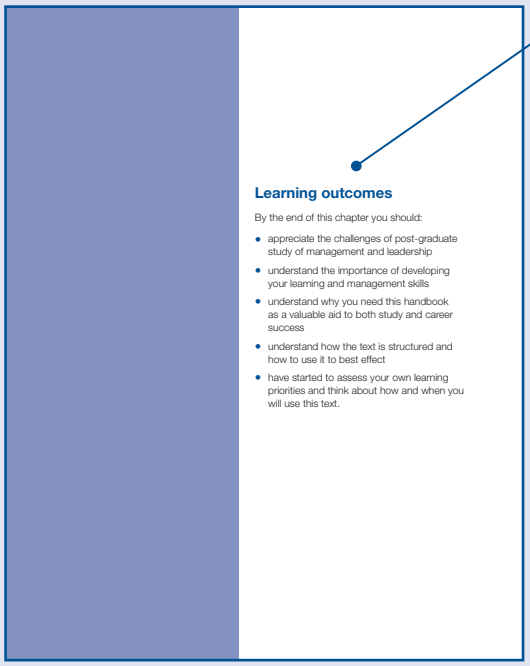
Text:

29 Verso Books: Montbiot, G. (2016) *How Did We Get Into This Mess? Politics, Equality, Nature*, London: Verso; **36 Pearson Education:** Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall; **57 Bloomsbury:** Goleman, D. (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Bloomsbury; **61 Reinhold Niebuhr:** Quoted by Reinhold Niebuhr, early 1930; **63 Kabat-Zinn, J:** Quoted by Kabat-Zinn, J. (2007a) Mindfulness with Jon Kabat-Zinn; **63 Kabat-Zinn, J:** Quoted by Kabat-Zinn, J. (2007b) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSU8ftmmhmw for lecture by J K-Z 2007 at Google on mindfulness stress reduction and healing (accessed 3.10.19/15); **131 HarperCollins:** Lewin, K. (ed. D. Cartwright) (1951) *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers*, New York: Harper Row, p.169; **135 Pearson Education:** Adapted from Kolb, D. A., Rubin, I. M. and McIntyre, J. M. (1984). Organizational Psychology (4th edn), Prentice Hall; **143 Science and Sanity:** Korzybski, A. (1931) 'A Non-Aristotelian System and Its Necessity for Rigour in Mathematics and Physics', Paper presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 28 December 1931. *Reprinted in Science and Sanity*, 1933, pp. 747–61; **141 Pearson Education:** Adapted from Argyris, C. and Schön, D. (1978), *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective,* Reading, MA: Addison Wesley; **145 Taylor & Francis Group:** Moon, J.A. (2000, reprinted 2005) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development,* RoutledgeFalmer; **151 Octopus Books:** Kline, N.(1999) *Time to Think*, Cassell Illustrated; **210 C.Bolton:** Adapted from C. Bolton and de Montfort University; **227 University of Illinois Press:** Based on Weaver and Shannon (1964) The mathematical theory of communication, Urbana: University of Illinois Press; **240 Hachette Livre:** Kline, N. (1999) *Time to Think*, Cassell Illustrated; **261 Sage Publications:** Sofo, F., Yeo, R.K. and Villafane, J. (2010) 'Optimizing the Learning in Action Learning: Reflective Questions, Levels of Learning and Coaching', *Advances in Developing Human*

Resources, 12: 205–224; **303 Roger Penrose:** Roger Penrose, a mathematics professor at the University of Oxford, Note at the start of The Emperor's New Mind, Oxford University Press, 1989; **485 CIPD Enterprises Limited:** Cameron,S. and Price, D. (2009) *Business Research Methods; A Practical Approach,* London: CIPD; **515 Pearson Education:** Derived from Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill (2009) Research Methods for Business Students, Prentice Hall.

Photo:
198 Alamy Images: geogphotos/Alamy Stock Photo; **319, 458 Neill Cameron:** Cartoon by Neill Cameron, www.neillcameron.com; **532 Microsoft Corporation:** Screen shot of Microsoft Excel © Microsoft Corporation.

GUIDED TOUR



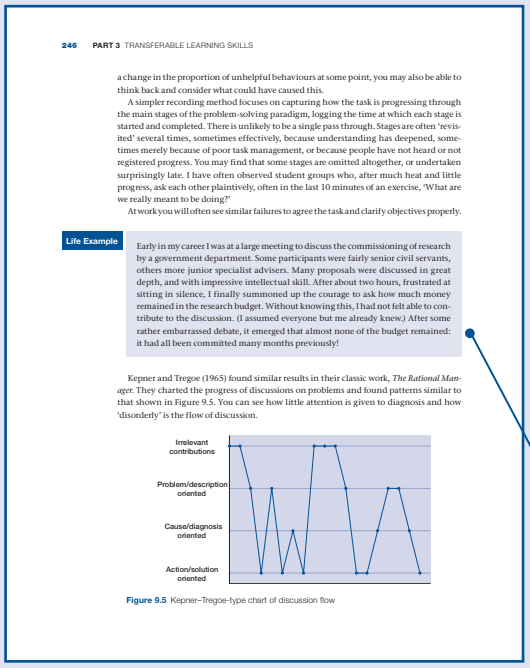
Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter you should:

- appreciate the challenges of post-graduate study of management and leadership
- understand the importance of developing your learning and management skills
- understand why you need this handbook as a valuable aid to both study and career success
- understand how the text is structured and how to use it to best effect
- have started to assess your own learning priorities and think about how and when you will use this text.

Learning outcomes appear at the start of each chapter. Think about whether they describe what you would like to gain from the chapter, and add any that you would hope to see. When you have finished a chapter refer to the learning outcomes, with any additional ones, and check the extent to which they have been achieved.

Activities are not something you can leave out to save time. Skipping them will significantly reduce the value of any time you spend on the text. Some may not be relevant to you but regard those in relevant chapters as essential, unless for some exceptional reason they do not apply to your particular situation or aims. Your thinking as you do activities will make subsequent material more obviously significant and will contribute significantly to developing relevant skills. Some activities are followed by 'Comment'. For others, the following text may build on them without specific comment. All the activities can also be accessed online using the link: **go.pearson.com/uk/he/resources**.



a change in the proportion of unhelpful behaviours at some point, you may also be able to think back and consider what could have caused this.

A simpler recording method focuses on capturing how the task is progressing through the main stages of the problem-solving paradigm, logging the time at which each stage is started and completed. There is unlikely to be a single pass through. Stages are often 'revisited' several times, sometimes effectively, because understanding has deepened, sometimes merely because of poor task management, or because people have not heard or not registered progress. You may find that some stages are omitted altogether, or undertaken surprisingly late. I have often observed student groups who, after much heat and little progress, ask each other plaintively, often in the last 10 minutes of an exercise, 'What are we really meant to be doing?'

At work you will often see similar failures to agree the task and clarify objectives properly.

Life Example

Early in my career I was at a large meeting to discuss the commissioning of research by a government department. Some participants were fairly senior civil servants, others more junior specialist advisers. Many proposals were discussed in great depth, and with impressive intellectual skill. After about two hours, frustrated at sitting in silence, I finally summoned up the courage to ask how much money remained in the research budget. Without knowing this, I had not felt able to contribute to the discussion. (I assumed everyone but me already knew.) After some rather embarrassed debate, it emerged that almost none of the budget remained: it had all been committed many months previously!

Kepner and Tregoe (1965) found similar results in their classic work, *The Rational Manager*. They charted the progress of discussions on problems and found patterns similar to that shown in Figure 9.5. You can see how little attention is given to diagnosis and how 'disorderly' is the flow of discussion.

Figure 9.5 Kepner–Tregoe-type chart of discussion flow

review and revise objectives when on the move. Experiment to find the best planning routine for you, and then follow it regularly.

Managers commonly underestimate the time required for task completion. This often stems from a genuine and confident belief that *this* task will proceed without the delays and other glitches experienced in the past with similar work. Such optimism is typical of poor time managers. If you suspect yourself of this 'planning fallacy', log your estimates for time required for tasks over the next week or two, and not actual time taken. Stark evidence of a mismatch may help you improve your estimating.

To direct your effort more appropriately:

- understand why you over-commit
- plan more effectively
- concentrate on important work
- delegate
- do things 'well enough'
- stop doing unimportant things.

Delegate more. Delegation requires an initial time investment in training your subordinate(s), and a willingness to believe that you are not the only person who can do the job properly. It also requires absolute clarity on your part concerning the objectives of the work, a reasonable deadline, and suitable points at which progress should be reviewed. All this must be communicated clearly to the person who is to do the work, together with an idea of how the work relates to other departmental work and objectives. This understanding of the context in which the work is required will make the job far more meaningful for the subordinate, and will make it likely that any discretion needed will be exercised in an appropriate way.

'Busy' managers often feel they have no time to develop their subordinates. They do not *think* clearly enough about what is required to do the work well, let alone communicate this to the subordinate. As a result, the work is poorly done, the subordinate learns nothing, and the manager's view that 'It's quicker to do it myself' or even 'I'm the only one who can do it properly' is reinforced.

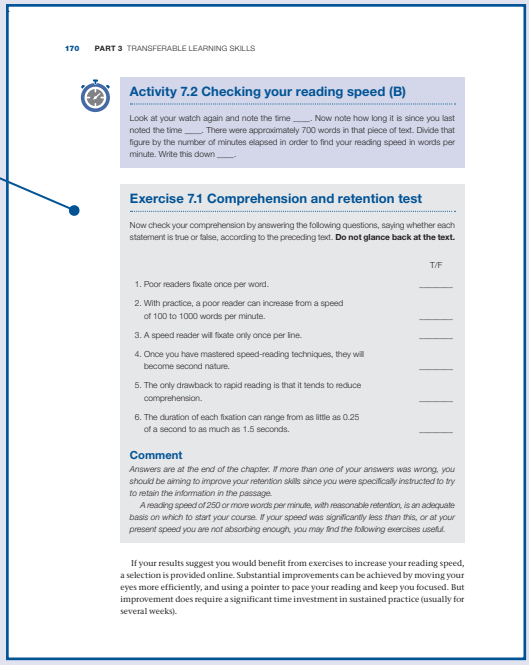
Activity 4.8 Delegation plan

Within the next week, identify at least three areas of work that could be delegated. Plan any staff development necessary for this delegation to be successful and take steps to set this in motion. Once it is complete, start to delegate work. Ensure that objectives are understood and agree targets and review points. Leave the subordinate to get on with it between reviews. Log plans and progress in your file, and put a note in your diary for six weeks hence to review the success with which you are delegating.

Understand why you over-commit. We usually contribute to our own overload by agreeing to do more than is reasonable, either because we underestimate the demands from our current workload or those of the new task. Or we may be insecure, afraid of being left out and want to prove that we are essential to the organisation. Being busy, and involved in everything, reduces this anxiety. Sometimes, the new task may simply have looked too interesting to refuse. If there is a culture within the organisation of saying 'yes' to every piece of work assigned, agreeing to over-commitment avoids adverse notice. Or sometimes it may be that non-working life offers few rewards and working long hours is preferable to facing the demands of the family, or being alone.

Life examples demonstrate points by drawing on relevant experiences from daily life.

Exercises are used to test your knowledge or understanding so that you can see whether you need to work through a section and/or to check your progress. They will have answers at the end of the chapter. Do not look at the answers before you do the exercise – it makes the exercise pointless and is in no way a substitute for actually doing the exercise.



170 PART 3 TRANSFERABLE LEARNING SKILLS

Activity 7.2 Checking your reading speed (B)

Look at your watch again and note the time ____. Now note how long it is since you last noted the time ____. There were approximately 700 words in that piece of text. Divide that figure by the number of minutes elapsed in order to find your reading speed in words per minute. Write this down ____.

Exercise 7.1 Comprehension and retention test

Now check your comprehension by answering the following questions, saying whether each statement is true or false, according to the preceding text. **Do not glance back at the text.**

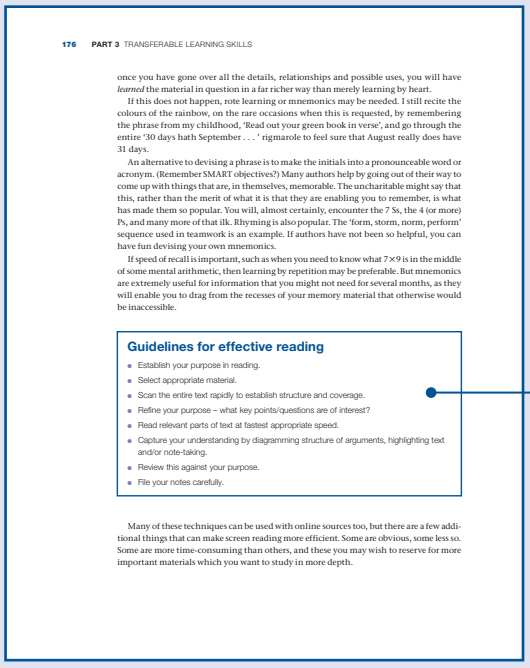
	T/F
1. Poor readers fixate once per word.	_____
2. With practice, a poor reader can increase from a speed of 100 to 1000 words per minute.	_____
3. A speed reader will fixate only once per line.	_____
4. Once you have mastered speed-reading techniques, they will become second nature.	_____
5. The only drawback to rapid reading is that it tends to reduce comprehension.	_____
6. The duration of each fixation can range from as little as 0.25 of a second to as much as 1.5 seconds.	_____

Comment

Answers are at the end of the chapter. If more than one of your answers was wrong, you should be aiming to improve your retention skills since you were specifically instructed to try to retain the information in the passage.

A reading speed of 250 or more words per minute, with reasonable retention, is an adequate basis on which to start your course. If your speed was significantly less than this, or at your present speed you are not absorbing enough, you may find the following exercises useful.

If your results suggest you would benefit from exercises to increase your reading speed, a selection is provided online. Substantial improvements can be achieved by moving your eyes more efficiently, and using a pointer to pace your reading and keep you focused. But improvement does require a significant time investment in sustained practice (usually for several weeks).



176 PART 3 TRANSFERABLE LEARNING SKILLS

once you have gone over all the details, relationships and possible uses, you will have *learned* the material in question in a far richer way than merely learning by heart.

If this does not happen, rote learning or mnemonics may be needed. I still recite the colours of the rainbow, on the rare occasions when this is requested, by remembering the phrase from my childhood, 'Read out your green book in verse', and go through the entire '30 days hath September . . . ' rigmarole to feel sure that August really does have 31 days.

An alternative to devising a phrase is to make the initials into a pronounceable word or acronym. (Remember SMART objectives?) Many authors help by going out of their way to come up with things that are, in themselves, memorable. The uncharitable might say that this, rather than the merit of what it is that they are enabling you to remember, is what has made them so popular. You will, almost certainly, encounter the 7 Ss, the 4 (or more) Ps, and many more of that ilk. Rhyming is also popular. The 'form, storm, norm, perform' sequence used in teamwork is an example. If authors have not been so helpful, you can have fun devising your own mnemonics.

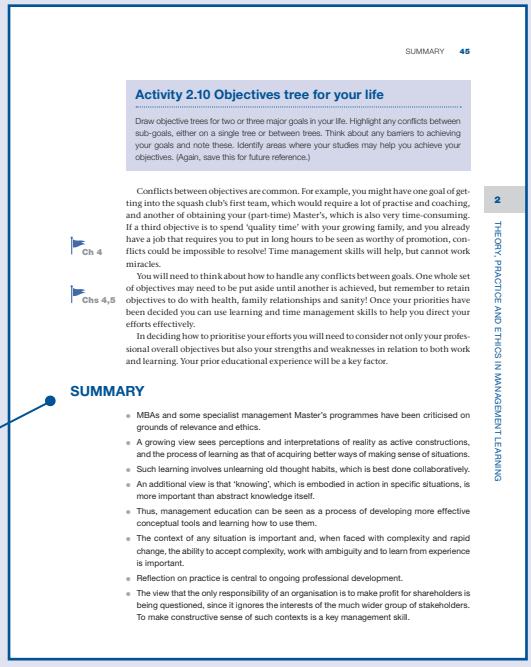
If speed of recall is important, such as when you need to know what 7×9 is in the middle of some mental arithmetic, then learning by repetition may be preferable. But mnemonics are extremely useful for information that you might not need for several months, as they will enable you to drag from the recesses of your memory material that otherwise would be inaccessible.

Guidelines for effective reading

- Establish your purpose in reading.
- Select appropriate material.
- Scan the entire text rapidly to establish structure and coverage.
- Refine your purpose – what key points/questions are of interest?
- Read relevant parts of text at fastest appropriate speed.
- Capture your understanding by diagramming structure of arguments, highlighting text and/or note-taking.
- Review this against your purpose.
- File your notes carefully.

Many of these techniques can be used with online sources too, but there are a few additional things that can make screen reading more efficient. Some are obvious, some less so. Some are more time-consuming than others, and these you may wish to reserve for more important materials which you want to study in more depth.

Guidelines are provided for some sections. These are a series of learning points that will help put your learning into practice. All the guidelines boxes are available online and can be accessed using the link: **go.pearson.com/uk/he/resources**



SUMMARY 45

Activity 2.10 Objectives tree for your life

Draw objective trees for two or three major goals in your life. Highlight any conflicts between sub-goals, either on a single tree or between trees. Think about any barriers to achieving your goals and note these. Identify areas where your studies may help you achieve your objectives. (Again, save this for future reference.)

Conflicts between objectives are common. For example, you might have one goal of getting into the squash club's first team, which would require a lot of practise and coaching, and another of obtaining your (part-time) Master's, which is also very time-consuming. If a third objective is to spend 'quality time' with your growing family, and you already have a job that requires you to put in long hours to be seen as worthy of promotion, conflicts could be impossible to resolve! Time management skills will help, but cannot work miracles.

Ch 4

You will need to think about how to handle any conflicts between goals. One whole set of objectives may need to be put aside until another is achieved, but remember to retain objectives to do with health, family relationships and sanity! Once your priorities have been decided you can use learning and time management skills to help you direct your efforts effectively.

Chs 4,5

In deciding how to prioritise your efforts you will need to consider not only your professional overall objectives but also your strengths and weaknesses in relation to both work and learning. Your prior educational experience will be a key factor.

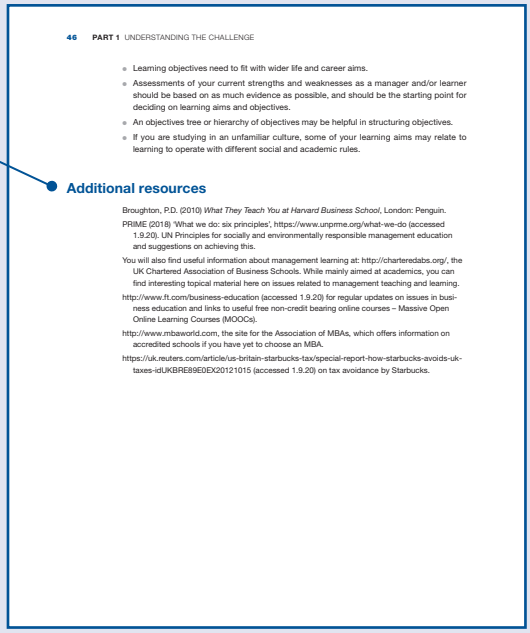
SUMMARY

- MBAs and some specialist management Master's programmes have been criticised on grounds of relevance and ethics.
- A growing view sees perceptions and interpretations of reality as active constructions, and the process of learning as that of acquiring better ways of making sense of situations.
- Such learning involves unlearning old thought habits, which is best done collaboratively.
- An additional view is that 'knowing', which is embodied in action in specific situations, is more important than abstract knowledge itself.
- Thus, management education can be seen as a process of developing more effective conceptual tools and learning how to use them.
- The context of any situation is important and, when faced with complexity and rapid change, the ability to accept complexity, work with ambiguity and to learn from experience is important.
- Reflection on practice is central to ongoing professional development.
- The view that the only responsibility of an organisation is to make profit for shareholders is being questioned, since it ignores the interests of the much wider group of stakeholders. To make constructive sense of such contexts is a key management skill.

2 THEORY, PRACTICE AND ETHICS IN MANAGEMENT LEARNING

Summary at the end of the chapter provides a very brief list of key points covered. Do not rely solely on this, however. Instead, make your own notes or mind map of the chapter as your read – you can then usefully compare it with that given and think about the reasons for the differences.

Additional resources at the end of the chapter gives details of other sources you might find useful if you want to go into more depth than the chapter allows. Do not regard the list as more than a hint – seek your own sources, which may be more relevant than those suggested.



46 PART 1 UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

- Learning objectives need to fit with wider life and career aims.
- Assessments of your current strengths and weaknesses as a manager and/or learner should be based on as much evidence as possible, and should be the starting point for deciding on learning aims and objectives.
- An objectives tree or hierarchy of objectives may be helpful in structuring objectives.
- If you are studying in an unfamiliar culture, some of your learning aims may relate to learning to operate with different social and academic rules.

Additional resources

Broughton, P.D. (2010) *What They Teach You at Harvard Business School*, London: Penguin.

PRIME (2018) 'What we do: six principles', https://www.unprme.org/what-we-do (accessed 1.9.20), UN Principles for socially and environmentally responsible management education and suggestions on achieving this.

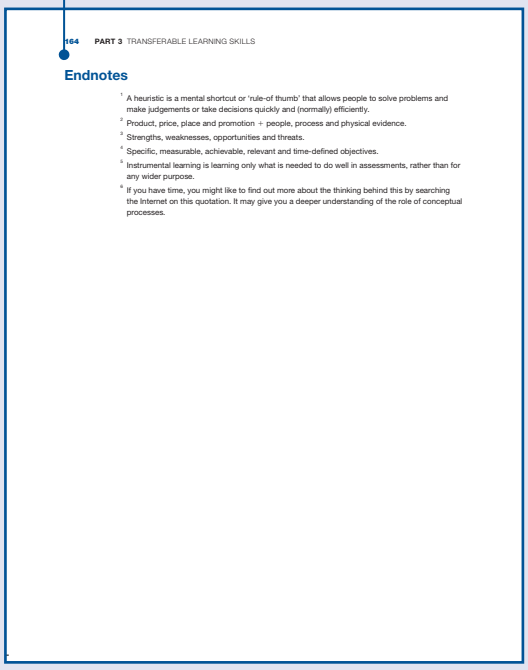
You will also find useful information about management learning at: http://charteredabs.org/, the UK Chartered Association of Business Schools. While mainly aimed at academics, you can find interesting topical material here on issues related to management teaching and learning.

http://www.ft.com/business-education (accessed 1.9.20) for regular updates on issues in business education and links to useful free non-credit bearing online courses – Massive Open Online Learning Courses (MOOCs).

http://www.mbaworld.com, the site for the Association of MBAs, which offers information on accredited schools if you have yet to choose an MBA.

https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-britain-starbucks-tax/special-report-how-starbucks-avoids-uk-taxes-idUKBRE89E0EX20121015 (accessed 1.9.20) on tax avoidance by Starbucks.

Endnotes at the end of a chapter include additional definitions or explanations that would break up the text and might be of interest to only a few readers. A small number after a word will indicate the place of a relevant note in the list for that chapter.



164 PART 3 TRANSFERABLE LEARNING SKILLS

Endnotes

[1] A heuristic is a mental shortcut or 'rule-of thumb' that allows people to solve problems and make judgements or take decisions quickly and (normally) efficiently.

[2] Product, price, place and promotion + people, process and physical evidence.

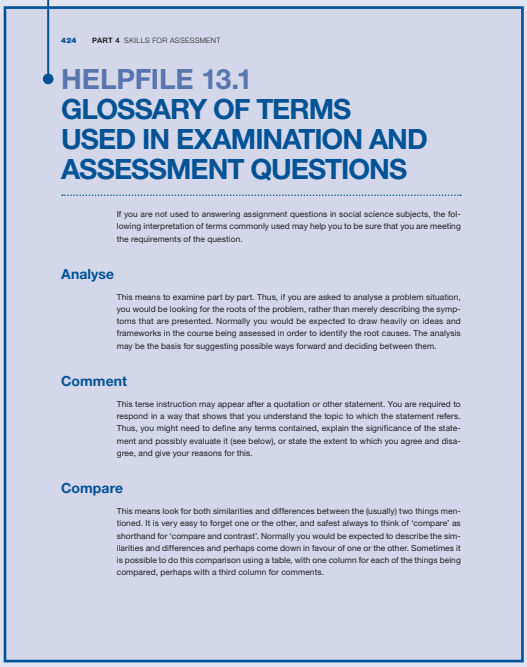
[3] Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

[4] Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-defined objectives.

[5] Instrumental learning is learning only what is needed to do well in assessments, rather than for any wider purpose.

[6] If you have time, you might like to find out more about the thinking behind this by searching the Internet on this quotation. It may give you a deeper understanding of the role of conceptual processes.

HelpFiles at the end of a chapter contain basic teaching materials or definitions that may be helpful for students who are relatively new to a topic.



424 PART 4 SKILLS FOR ASSESSMENT

HELPFILE 13.1
GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

If you are not used to answering assignment questions in social science subjects, the following interpretation of terms commonly used may help you to be sure that you are meeting the requirements of the question.

Analyse

This means to examine part by part. Thus, if you are asked to analyse a problem situation, you would be looking for the roots of the problem, rather than merely describing the symptoms that are presented. Normally you would be expected to draw heavily on ideas and frameworks in the course being assessed in order to identify the root causes. The analysis may be the basis for suggesting possible ways forward and deciding between them.

Comment

This terse instruction may appear after a quotation or other statement. You are required to respond in a way that shows that you understand the topic to which the statement refers. Thus, you might need to define any terms contained, explain the significance of the statement and possibly evaluate it (see below), or state the extent to which you agree and disagree, and give your reasons for this.

Compare

This means look for both similarities and differences between the (usually) two things mentioned. It is very easy to forget one or the other, and safest always to think of 'compare' as shorthand for 'compare and contrast'. Normally you would be expected to describe the similarities and differences and perhaps come down in favour of one or the other. Sometimes it is possible to do this comparison using a table, with one column for each of the things being compared, perhaps with a third column for comments.

Marginal icons include:

Chapter flags in margins indicate past chapters on which the material builds, and future chapters where it is developed further, so that you can have a quick look forwards or backwards if you need to.

To direct your effort more appropriately:

- understand why you over-commit
- plan more effectively
- concentrate on important work
- delegate
- do things 'well enough'
- stop doing unimportant things.

Boxed summaries partly in margins at the start of a longer section. These outline key points to be covered. They can be useful as orientation and as a reference point later.

to indicate that an online resource is available from **go.pearson.com/uk/he/resources**. It includes all the activities and guidelines from the book, proformas for activities, together with multiple choice questions and any additional notes so that you can have them to hand in class or when working through a chapter.

to show when group discussion would be useful.

to show where notes could usefully be saved in a file, or made in a learning journal. You will need to get a notebook and/or create a file in which you keep your responses to activities and other thoughts as a record of your learning experiences. Your record helps you engage with the materials, makes study more interesting and motivating, can provide a startling record of how much you have progressed, and could form part of a portfolio for assessment.

Companion Website

Visit **go.pearson.com/uk/he/resources** for a wealth of additional resources to support your learning, including:

Multiple choice questions for each chapter that are designed to check your understanding of key points in each chapter.

All **activities and guidelines** from the book to download and/or print. Pin them to your wall or add them to your own revision notes.

Online proforma and excel sheet as a readily available reference.

URLs that suggest additional resources for chapters.

PART 1
UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

If you understand the context in which you are studying, the challenges and opportunities it presents and how this text will help you succeed as a student, everything will make a lot more sense. You will enjoy your course more, be more relaxed, and direct your efforts towards what is important. This first part addresses these issues of context.

1 Orientation to postgraduate management learning and the role of the handbook

2 Theory, practice and ethics in management learning

1

ORIENTATION TO POSTGRADUATE MANAGEMENT LEARNING AND THE ROLE OF THE HANDBOOK

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter you should:

- appreciate the challenges of post-graduate study of management and leadership
- understand the importance of developing your learning and management skills
- understand why you need this handbook as a valuable aid to both study and career success
- understand how the text is structured and how to use it to best effect
- have started to assess your own learning priorities and think about how and when you will use this text.

Introduction

This text aims to help you develop the skills you will need to do well at postgraduate level, and to show how the same skills can contribute to career success as a manager. Studying management, leadership and related subjects at postgraduate (P/G) level presents challenges that few students expect, and that cause more than a few to drop out, or to do less well than they had hoped. This is a huge waste of the considerable investment – of time and emotion, as well as of money – these students will have made. To succeed, and to maximise the return on your own investment, you need to understand these challenges you will face and prepare yourself for them.

You also need to understand your own mix of strengths and weaknesses. You may have a strong academic background, either in a relevant or very different subject, or have come through a more vocational route. You may have considerable senior management experience (and may be studying while still managing) or be studying full time soon after gaining your first degree, with no management experience at all. You may be studying in a familiar or unfamiliar cultural and educational context. You may be studying as part of a work-based scheme, with substantial support from your organisation, or trying to keep your study secret from your employers. There are advantages and disadvantages of most combinations of positions on these dimensions. Your particular mix of challenges – and opportunities – will be specific to you!

If you want to gain full value from your programme, and gain the grades you aim for, you need to understand your own strengths and weaknesses in relation to your chosen programme, and to appreciate the way management is currently conceived. This will determine the kind of learning that is therefore needed for success as a student and as a manager. This handbook is designed to help with both these requirements.

To use this text to help you learn, you need to understand something about the structure of the text. This section provides an overview of some of the main characteristics and challenges of postgraduate (P/G) learning, and the role of the handbook in helping you meet them. The rest of the chapter expands on this and starts a process of identifying your own specific learning priorities, and planning to address these.

As you work through the text, your learning and practice will develop. Pointers to other chapters in the margin will show where to look in the text for further development of topics. A key aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of key topics in the text and lay the **necessary** groundwork and motivation for this subsequent work. So do spend a little time working through it.

Obvious and less obvious challenges of study at this level

Time management is a vital skill for study and work. Failure to devote enough time to study is the main reason for student underachievement and drop-out. Even full-time students struggle. Studying while working has many advantages, but can present major conflicts in terms of demands on your time. Even if an employer notionally allows time off for study, they all too often do not, or cannot, reduce job demands in line with this.

Ch 4

Finding study time will be a major challenge for almost all students, as will be making the best possible use of this precious resource. (Note that a chapter number in the margin such as that on the left indicates that the chapter(s) flagged deal with the topic in more detail.)

Ch 3

An associated challenge is **keeping yourself motivated** when time pressures become intense, or material is difficult, or you are not doing as well as you hoped. This is more likely to happen if you allow such stresses to affect your sleep or your health, perhaps by not eating and exercising properly. Motivation can also drop if you lose sight of your goals in studying.

Ch 7

The sheer **volume of material** you need to get through may well be a challenge depending on your reading and notetaking skills. As well as set text, the internet is awash with potentially useful material, and with a lot of rubbish. Some students spend far too long learning text, rather than thinking about it. Some lack the skills for **selecting materials** that are particularly relevant to their current issue and spend time on irrelevant or unreliable materials.

Chs 6,7

Another common challenge is the shift in **the demands on your thought processes**. Most management programmes will require a far more active and critical approach to your learning than you may be used to, particularly if you studied a 'fact-based' course, and/or studied in a country where students are seen as passive recipients of a teacher's knowledge and assessed mainly on their recall of what they have been taught rather than their ability to criticise and apply this knowledge. If your study to date has been outside the educational system in which you are a postgraduate, you will need to be alert to, and adapt to, any such differences. Similarly, if your background is in hard rather than social science, you may need to learn to think and write more critically than in the past. A background in arts may indicate more difficulty with application of ideas to practice. If you are alert to these particular challenges, and their roots in your past experience, you may find it easier to identify and accept the changes you need to make.

The reason management education requires **applying abstract ideas** to very concrete situations is that while management is a respectable area of academic study and research, most students aim to have a career in management rather than academia. Ideas therefore need to be useful in the sense of leading to better strategic decisions and effective day-to-day management to implement these decisions. Abstract ideas do this by helping you to make better sense of your experiences so that you can learn from them more effectively, and giving you a wider range of perceived options.

Both major decisions and everyday practice take place in hugely **complex organisational and wider contexts.** Many factors are involved, and there are many more inter-relationships between them that will affect outcomes. Often, the nature of these relationships is uncertain, as are the ways in which external factors will change, for example as the economy fluctuates, legislation is introduced, or technology offers completely new possibilities.

Application of ideas therefore requires the recognition of the complexities of any situation, and tools for thinking about what may at first seem 'too complicated'. Much of the theory you will learn will be intended to provide tools for this. **Systems thinking**[1] is essential here, as it provides ways of capturing factors and relationships within and between organisations and the wider environment.

Chs 7,10

Other theory and research will need **a critical approach**, one which questions whether it is based on evidence that is strong and relevant enough to help in the present situation. It is important, too, to ensure that the range of theories you are using to make sense of a situation is broad enough to cast light on the key aspects of the issue, rather than 'oversimplifying' some of them out of existence. Humans have a strong tendency to leap to 'obvious' solutions which are far simpler than the situation demands.

The demands on you will change as you progress to more senior roles, for example issues will become more complex. Changes in the organisation and its environment will add to the degree of change you will face. A key requirement of any profession is that its members commit to an ongoing process of continuing professional development (CPD), usually through **reflection on practice** (Kolb, 1984) informed by theory – the ideas you learned through qualification studies, and subsequent reading and training. You are likely to be required to develop your ability to reflect productively on your practice, and, to capture this reflection and the plans that result from it, often in the form of a **reflective log** or learning journal. This can be a real challenge for many students, who as a result 'go through the motions' rather than develop this crucial learning skill.

Chs 2,6

Growing power differentials within organisations, the growing power of multinationals in relation to governments, and increasing realisation of the impact of growth-based economies on the planet are now posing significant ethical questions. **Management ethics** is another area full of uncertainties, where views differ as to what is 'right' depending on cultural and political backgrounds. Growing inequality and climate threats are causing many to question the view that organisations have a moral obligation to maximise profit for their shareholders, no matter what impact this has on individuals or economies. They are questioning the ethics of relying on markets as the main controlling factor in an economic system, and on growth as the main goal. Senior managers will need the skills to deal with such questions, and the likely radical changes that some of the answers may require.

Ch 2

The ease with which you learn about organisational issues will depend in part on your experience of management (or of being managed) prior to study and on whether you are studying part time while working, or have taken time out to study full time. If you are working while studying, you may be able to talk with colleagues in other parts of the organisation about their experience with issues in your course. If you are studying before gaining management experience, you will need to find other ways of 'connecting' to management challenges. You may find family and friends who are managers are an important source of practical experience. Whatever your background, learning from the case studies you encounter in your programme will be important.

Chs 2,10

Teamwork is vital in organisations and will be the basis of much of your learning. A real challenge for many students is to think more flexibly, so that a shared approach emerges from the team, even if they initially saw things differently. Often, teams do poorly because members are not prepared to listen properly to others, and stick to their own position even when others are making a strong argument for a different view. Often, this is because they are not aware of the extent to which their views are limited by their underlying assumptions about the situation, or indeed the world. **Dialogue** in teams can uncover such assumptions, and potentially lead to far more creative and constructive results. Dialogue requires careful, open-minded listening, and the self-confidence to accept that there

Ch 9

may be more valid assumptions than your own. The ability to dialogue effectively may distinguish a good manager from an excellent one.

As well as the **personal management skills** and general conceptual challenges your programme may pose, you may have concerns about specific skills. Common student concerns are **understanding** and **analysing numerical data**, especially in the area of finance, and when it comes to doing your own research, coping with writing assignments and exams, and making presentations on group projects. Your programme may assume a knowledge level you feel you do not have, and so does not offer refresher courses in these areas. Programmes are, however, likely to provide online resources. The relevant chapters in this handbook may go some way to reduce any anxieties and help you make better use of any resources provided.

Chs 11, 12,13, 14,15

Key challenges include:

- Managing time
- Managing yourself
- Engaging with learning actively and proactively
- Planning and managing your own learning
- Letting go of assumptions
- Accepting complexity
- Drawing on background academic skills.

To summarise, changing your thinking is necessary if you are to *learn* effectively (individually and in a group). You need *to think* critically and reflectively and to face up to *complexity*. You will also need to be prepared to 'unlearn' things you think you know, to challenge long-held assumptions, and to be self-critical. This requires a degree of self-confidence, and the acceptance that no one, including yourself, is perfect. For some students, this is a major challenge.

Effective management learning demands that you take **an active, proactive and interactive approach** to your learning about relevant aspects of the organisational world. What may be less obvious is that you need to take a similar approach to yourself. Personal management skills are essential for success in study and in work. If you can diagnose your own learning priorities in the light of your understanding of what is needed for your course, and of your own background and strengths and weaknesses, you will learn far more from your course (and get better grades). At the end of this chapter you will start a process of planning what to study in depth and how to study it. You will develop your plans throughout your use of the text, and beyond.

Ch 2

Engaging with your learning

Engaging with your learning means taking charge of it and shaping it to meet your particular needs. This requires, above all, that you work out what is most important for you to learn, and then manage your learning to achieve this. Passive absorption will not be enough. Active learning requires you to be constantly:

- **thinking** – this requires a process of comparing where you are at with how you currently see things with what you are discovering about them
- **experimenting with ideas** – this means trying out different ways of thinking about things to see where they lead you
- **planning your learning** – this requires working out the gap between where you are now and what you want to achieve, and then looking at the resources you will need to achieve your learning goal. Resources might include time, information and input from others.

Chs 3,16