

## A SELF-DIRECTED APPROACH TO LEARNING

### What does it mean to self-direct one's learning? <sup>1-3</sup>

- Healthcare professionals are required to update, enhance and maintain their knowledge, skills, and expertise in an ever-changing landscape of health and disease.
- Regulation of and commitment to one's own lifelong learning needs is important in maintaining good medical professionalism.
- Self-regulation of learning involves a cyclic process of setting learning goals, choosing learning strategies and assessing progress towards goals.
- Self-directed learning skills are not innate but must be learned through training and deliberate practice.
- One of the strategies to stimulate self-regulation of learning involves formulating and reviewing a **learning plan** with a supervisor.

### What is a learning plan and how does it help? <sup>2-4</sup>

Learning plans provide a way for learners to identify what they need to learn, how they are going to learn it, how they will know they have learned it, and how their plan links to past and future learning.

Learning plans are a useful way to optimise workplace learning. They provide opportunities for a learner and a supervisor to reflect and explore learning opportunities and skill refinements that can be undertaken through everyday work tasks.



#### A learning plan will help trainees to:

- explicitly document self-assessment of learning gaps, goal setting, and strategies to address and achieve goals
- proactively take control of their learning and career trajectories
- enhance awareness into their own areas of strengths and gaps
- make the most of learning opportunities available to them in their training setting, including conversations with supervisors.



#### A learning plan will help supervisors to:

- have a shared mental model of a trainees' goals, learning gaps and plans to address their needs.
- have a better picture of trainee progress against clear standards.
- provide more direct and personalised feedback
- better identify trainees' needs and support their learning
- maintain better continuity with trainees and longitudinal visibility of their learning trajectories.

#### References

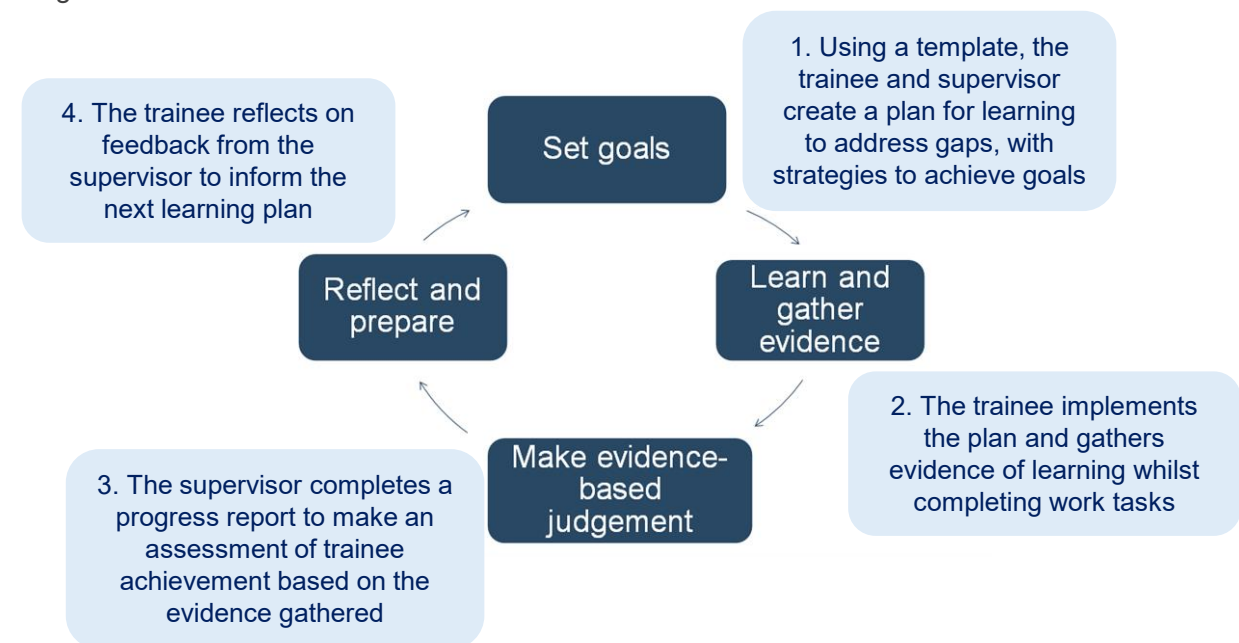
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2. AMEE Medical Education Guide No. 19: Personal learning plans
3. Su-Ting T. Factors Associated with Successful Self-Directed Learning Using Individualized Learning Plans During Paediatric Residency. *Acad Pediatr.* 2010, 10:124–30
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### What is the evidence that learning plans work? <sup>1, 3-6</sup>

- Training programs that promote self-regulated learning have been found to be beneficial for trainees' learning.
- Learning plans facilitate self-directed learning skills that are important in undertaking continuous professional development activities later as unsupervised clinicians.
- A number of studies of specialist trainees using individualised learning plans have reported them to be useful for:
  - providing a framework and focus for learning
  - amplifying conscious awareness of the learning process
  - citing unique clinical experiences, opportunities to collaborate on projects, and career planning
  - monitoring competencies that are otherwise difficult to acquire and evaluate
  - forming good learning habits and preparing trainees for unsupervised practice.

### How will learning plans work in the new RACP training programs?

The Learning Plan in the new RACP training programs is based on a cycle of self-regulated learning.



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