

Narrative Format: Foundation levels 1 & 2 briefing

Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL)

The GULL narrative format provides a practical and flexible approach to work and community-based learning so that GULL participants can interlink their roles at work and in the community with reflection, review, improvement and on-going personal and professional development.

GULL offers three pathways (Professional Bachelor, Master and Doctor) to Government recognized certificates, diplomas and degrees, each with five levels or certification points.

Professional Bachelor pathway

Typical entry profile: 17-25 years of age and those in this age range and older with limited literacy skills.

The Professional Bachelor pathway is for those who are younger in age and with relatively limited life and work experience. It is also for participants in this age range and older who have not had the opportunity to learn to read and write in their own language. Participants in this second category can attain Professional Bachelor levels 1 Entry and 2 Certificate based on oral evidence of learning. Beyond this, participants must develop basic reading/writing skills in their own language in order to attain Bachelor level 3. All activities and levels can be customized for full integration with any on-going work or community activity.

Foundation levels: Bachelor level 1 Entry and level 2 Certificate

Progression levels: Bachelor level 3 Diploma; level 4 Associate degree and level 5 Professional degree.

Professional Master pathway

Typical entry profile: 26-35 years of age holding senior work or community roles. It is also for those aged 26 and above who have completed the GULL professional Bachelor degree.

The Professional Master degree pathway is for those in senior work or community roles (no other qualification is required) and for those aged 26 and above who have completed the GULL professional Bachelor degree. Please note that the GULL professional Master pathway should not be used as a 'fast track' development route for young graduates with an academic Bachelor degree. This is because experience and seniority are the essential entry criteria on which the pathway to professional mastery is founded. All activities and levels can be customized for full integration with any on-going work or community activity.

Foundation levels: Master level 1 Entry and level 2 Certificate

Progression levels: Master level 3 Diploma; level 4 Advanced Diploma and level 5 Professional degree.

Professional Doctor pathway

Typical entry profile: At least 30 years of age but ideally for those in their 40s and 50s who hold leadership roles in the workplace or the community. It is also for those aged 30 and above who have completed the GULL professional Master degree.

The Professional Doctor degree pathway is for work and community leaders (no other qualification is required) and for those aged 30 and above who have completed the GULL professional Master degree. Please note that the GULL professional Doctor pathway should not be used as a 'fast track' development route for young post graduates with an academic Master degree. This is because maturity (the ideal age profile is late 30s and beyond) and a leadership role are the essential entry criteria on which the pathway is founded. All activities and levels can be customized for full integration with any on-going work or community activity.

Foundation levels: Doctor level 1 Entry and level 2 Certificate

Progression levels: Doctor level 3 Diploma; level 4 Advanced Diploma and level 5 Professional degree.

To illustrate how these pathways can be integrated with a workplace or community environment, please see Appendix 1.

Review and certification

All GULL awards based on narrative format reporting are ungraded and certified at 'Pass' level. This is because the narrative format is broader-based than GULL's differentiated awards (with Pass, Credit and Distinction categories) as defined by GULL's comprehensive marking and grading criteria.

GULL's approach encourages self-directed action learning so as to build self-confidence and independent lifelong learning skills - right across the age and life stage spectrum. GULL's awards are outcomes-based and it is only possible to issue certificates when sufficient evidence of attainment has been assembled by the learner and verified by a facilitator.

This is because GULL's primary role is to certify evidence of learning and application and it is the responsibility of each and every GULL participant to capture their own evidence in an appropriate and/or specified format. If the evidence assembled by the learner is incomplete, he/she does not 'fail' but must continue the process until there is sufficient evidence of attainment to merit the award of a certificate at any given level. On completion of levels 1-4, participants can either pause or progress immediately to the next level. At level 5 (the professional degree) for all three pathways (Bachelor/Master/Doctor), the participant's portfolio of work and evidence of learning and application must be approved and signed-off by an experienced facilitator and additionally verified by an experienced independent professional. The workplace or community verifier should discuss the candidate's output work with the participant in the presence of the facilitator so as to ensure that the candidate is the author of the work and that the criteria for 'sufficiency' have been met. If not, the candidate must continue until any gaps have been addressed.

There are two certification options for all level 5 awards. These are: Bachelor/Master/Doctor of Professional Studies (Specialism) where the specialism is determined by the context, the inputs (as appropriate) and the applications OR Bachelor/Master/Doctor of Management (a generic award).

Getting started with GULL: Foundation levels 1 & 2

Professional Bachelor (B), Master (M) and Doctor (D) pathways

Levels:	Narrative format elements:
B, M & D level 1 Duration: 7 weeks	Personal learning statement (PLS) in week 1; One diary format reflection cycle (linked to routine activities) with four weekly summaries (750 words each) in weeks 2, 3, 4 and 5, one monthly summary (750 words) in week 6 and a return on outcomes (RO) form (750 words) in week 7.
B, M & D level 2 Duration: 7 weeks	PLS update; One diary format reflection cycle (linked to a work or community-based challenge) with four weekly summaries (750 words each), one monthly summary (750 words) and a RO form (750 words). Timings as for level 1.

Level 1 involves the completion of a personal learning statement (in week 1), the use of a diary reflection cycle format (in weeks 2-6) and a return on outputs form (in week 7). The aim is to enable participants to identify their own personal learning needs, to begin to use and understand the process of action learning and to learn how to work with a web of support (including a personal learning coach of their own choice) as they create their own personal plan for learning. As participants continue at level 2 with a second diary format reflection cycle, they typically gain in confidence and proficiency by using action learning to help themselves and other stakeholders in the process.

Narrative format feedback is not based on individual marks or grades but the facilitator will provide oral and written comments on each output element. The facilitator's objective is to encourage each participant to attain 'sufficiency' of breadth and depth in their reflections and written output work. Beyond this, the role of the facilitator is to encourage, guide and clarify (but not to direct) so that new participants develop self-directed, independent learning habits. This is important because in many settings (especially in the community), GULL expects those who have completed level 2 to serve as foundation level facilitators for new entrants at level 1. This may be a key requirement at level 3 so as to cascade and multiply GULL as widely as possible to those who would like to participate. To enable this, progression level GULL participants should actively consider how they can assist in passing on their skills and experience of action learning to foundation level participants.

Although GULL's materials are released in English, participants are encouraged to use their own language, providing that others can read / understand the work for the purposes of peer review, facilitation and verification.

Using the personal learning statement

Individually completed by GULL participants at professional Bachelor, Master and Doctor level 1 and updated at level 2.

The personal learning statement (PLS) enables every participant to reflect on their own unique agenda for learning and to determine what they would like to accomplish for themselves and for others over a time period of 12 months. The form consists of nine questions and in order to answer each of them in sufficient detail, the required response is 750 words (in total). The PLS questions are as follows:

Consider your current job:

(1) What is going well? (2) What could I do better?

Consider the current activity you are undertaking:

(3) What would I like to accomplish for myself? (4) For my team? (5) For my department or unit?

Consider future possibilities:

- (6) What new/different types of work would I like to experience? (7) Where do I see myself in 12 months time?
(8) What new skills will I need to achieve my 12 month goal? (9) In summary: What do I need to learn (drawing from questions 1-8 inclusive)

The process of thinking about personal learning needs and aspirations should enable the learner to identify who they know who they could ask to journey with them in a supportive coaching role. The personal learning coach (who is assisting the learner in a voluntary capacity) is *the* key support person. Ideally, all participants will enlist one or more individuals to coach them - perhaps someone at work and someone from their wider network of contacts. Furthermore, the learner should consider the potential support roles of their network of family, friends and colleagues in the creation of a personal web of support. This is especially important if the learner is seeking to make adjustments to ways of working (e.g. improving time management skills) and/or to developing new skills (e.g. developing personal coaching skills so as to encourage and help others).

The key questions for every participant are: Who do I know and respect and feel I could learn from? Can I persuade this individual or individuals to support me as my personal learning coach for part or all of my GULL learning journey?

Using the daily, weekly and monthly summary forms (Diary format reflection cycle)

Individually completed by GULL participants at professional Bachelor, Master and Doctor levels 1 and 2.

The diary format reflection cycle provides an opportunity to learn from activities and inputs over a 5 week period, using a diary format to record experiences. The objective is to enable participants to learn by reflecting on activities at work or in the community - as they occur. The diary format draws on four weekly summaries and one monthly summary with learning coach and reviewer support (organized by the learner) so as to enable the participant to fully utilize their work or community role as a vehicle for personal and professional development.

The diary format questions are as follows:

Daily summary (optional)

(1) List of today's activities (2) What went well and why? (3) What didn't go well and why? (4) What could I have done differently and how?

Weekly summary (750 words per weekly summary)

(1) List of the main activities this week (2) What went well and why? (3) What didn't go well and why? (4) What could I have done differently and how? (5) What have I learnt this week? (6) Discussion points for my learning coach (7) Discussion outcomes.

Monthly summary (750 words per monthly summary)

(1) List of the main activities this month (2) What went well and why? (3) What didn't go well and why? (4) What could I have done differently and how? (5) What have I learnt this month and what do I need to learn next? (7) Written comment from the learning coach (8) Feedback from the internal reviewer (the facilitator).

In order to utilize the diary format as effectively as possible, it is important to establish a routine. Here are two suggestions to assist with this task:

- Build and sustain your own web of support and agree a pattern of sharing your insights and experiences with your learning coach, web of support members and your fellow action learners.
- Help other members of your action learning group by offering feedback comments on their diary work (and vice versa). Self-facilitation and peer review encourage independence and inter-dependence - this is a core value of action learning.

The main objective of levels 1 and 2 is to encourage participants to establish a self-directed learning culture within their action learning group and, more widely as group members cascade the GULL process to others. As the process becomes embedded, it should reflect local characteristics so that all participants take ownership for themselves, their workplace and community. Reg Revans, an action learning pioneer, saw the importance of building self-belief - he always told groups that you don't need outsiders to do this for you - you can do it yourself.

As you start your diary work, select a few activities (they do not need to be the same ones each day) and use the diary format questions to practice your reflection, review and writing skills. To establish a habit, try using the same time slot each day - early or late perhaps? Just write - don't stop and then find 10 minutes to edit your work (never write and edit at the same time). So, 10 minutes a day to write and then try editing (10 minutes) every other day. Aim to draft, edit and then share your work with your learning coach and with fellow group members. Ask others to read, comment and point out any grammatical glitches and ambiguities so that you can then sharpen and strengthen your diary narrative.

After completing the diary format reflection cycle, a return on outputs form is provided so that you can summarize your learning outcomes to-date.

Using the return on outputs form

Individually completed by GULL participants at professional Bachelor, Master and Doctor levels 1 and 2.

The return on outputs (RO) form is primarily designed to enable participants to gather and summarize the learning outcomes arising from a diary format reflection cycle. The form enables participants to document personal and organizational learning outcomes, to explain the value of the outcomes by reference to improvements and other examples and to outline recommendations for implementing outcomes and any further action(s) required. The guide length is 750 words and the RO form sub-headings are:

- (1) Provide a summary of the action learning or other development activity undertaken.
- (2) What were the key learning outcomes?
- (3) Describe the personal learning arising from this activity.
- (4) Describe the organizational learning arising from this activity.
- (5) Explain the value of the outcomes from this activity (e.g. improvements made).
- (6) List your recommendations for implementing these outcomes and outline any further action required.

As noted earlier, the purpose of foundation levels 1 and 2 is to enable GULL participants to explore and find natural ways of integrating personal and professional development with work and community roles and to develop 'learning to learn' skills using an active learning approach. The key skills here are: Learning to ask questions, learning to reflect, learning to work with your personal learning coach, with other members of your action learning group and wider web of support, your colleagues and with your workplace or community team – using a collaborative, active learning approach.

To enable participants to further develop these skills, level 2 features a second diary format reflection cycle. Start by updating your personal learning statement and talking with your learning coach and web of support. Consider: What will you do differently during level 2? Next, repeat the diary format reflection cycle and to add variety, link this cycle to a work or community-based task or challenge. Continue to select a few daily activities to reflect on and write about and in addition, reflect on progress as it relates to your on-going task over the 5 week period. Ideally the task might be shared with other members of your action learning group so that it becomes a small group project. Finally, complete a second return on outputs form.

Resources for GULL participants and their web of support

Forms

Personal learning statement (PLS) form	Use the PLS to reflect on your learning needs and aspirations in week 1.
Daily summary form	Use for daily notes and to assist with the weekly summary form.
Weekly summary form	Transfer your daily notes to your weekly summary form. Identify and review key activities and points for discussion with your learning coach. Plan for a 10 minute face-to-face discussion each week and then add your discussion outcomes to the weekly form prior to peer review (with colleagues) and your facilitator.
Monthly summary form	Use in week five to review progress over the full cycle. Your learning coach will need to add his/her personal comment to this form.
Return on outputs form	Use to summarize your learning outcomes to-date in week 7.

Briefing resources

Narrative format foundation levels 1 & 2 overview	Provides an accompanying explanation with diagrams to illustrate the GULL narrative format approach at Foundation levels 1 & 2.
Introducing action learning	Provides an overview on the GULL learning process.
A profile of Reg Revans	Insights from an action learning pioneer.
Briefing for learning coaches	Pass a copy of this resource to your learning coach.
Briefing for specialist advisers	Use this resource to brief your wider web of support.

Appendix 1: The GULL narrative format at work and in the community

Professional Bachelor pathway

Typical entry profile: 17-25 years of age and those in this age range and older with limited literacy skills.

Level (L) progression →				
L1: Entry	L2: Certificate	L3: Diploma	L4: Associate degree	L5: Bachelor degree
Foundation	Foundation	Progression	Progression	Progression
PLS, DF, RO	PLS, DF, RO	DFMS, PRF	PRF	PRF, LSF, ORF
Focus: Routine activity	Focus: Routine and task	Options: SGP or FP or combination	Options: SGP or FP or combination	Options: SGP or FP or combination
Time: 7 weeks	Time: 7 weeks	Time: 10 weeks	Time: 12 weeks	Time: 14 weeks

Professional Master pathway

Typical entry profile: 26-35 years of age holding senior work or community roles. It is also for those aged 26 and above who have completed the GULL professional Bachelor degree.

Level (L) progression →				
L1: Entry	L2: Certificate	L3: Diploma	L4: Adv. Diploma	L5: Master degree
Foundation	Foundation	Progression	Progression	Progression
PLS, DF, RO	PLS, DF, RO	DFMS, PRF	PRF	PRF, LSF, ORF
Focus: Routine activity	Focus: Routine and task	Options: SGP/FP/LP or combination	Options: SGP/FP/LP or combination	Options: SGP/FP/LP or combination
Time: 7 weeks	Time: 7 weeks	Time: 10 weeks	Time: 12 weeks	Time: 14 weeks

Professional Doctor pathway

Typical entry profile: At least 30 years of age holding leadership roles in the workplace or the community. It is also for those aged 30 and above who have completed the GULL professional Master degree.

Level (L) progression →				
L1: Entry	L2: Certificate	L3: Diploma	L4: Adv. Diploma	L5: Doctor degree
Foundation	Foundation	Progression	Progression	Progression
PLS, DF, RO	PLS, DF, RO	DFMS, PRF	PRF	PRF, LSF, ORF
Focus: Routine activity	Focus: Routine and task	Options: SGP/FP/LP or combination	Options: SGP/FP/LP or combination	Options: SGP/FP/LP or combination
Time: 7 weeks	Time: 7 weeks	Time: 10 weeks	Time: 12 weeks	Time: 14 weeks

Abbreviations:

Foundation levels 1 & 2:

PLS - Personal learning statement
DF - Diary format reflection cycle
RO - Return on outputs form

Project options: Bachelor levels 3,4 & 5:

SGP - Small group project
FP - Facilitation project (guide new entrants)

Progression levels 3, 4 & 5:

DFMS - Diary format monthly summary form
PRF - Project review form
LSF - Learning summary form
ORF - Outcomes review form

Project options: Master and Doctor levels 3, 4 & 5:

SGP - Small group project
FP - Facilitation project (guide new entrants)
LP - Leadership project (individual or shared)