ANALYSING PROVISION TO IMPROVE LEARNER PROGRESS
(SWOT ANALYSIS)

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Analysing provision to improve learner progress (SWOT Analysis)

Rationale/Outline

Ofsted inspections have repeatedly found that provision of study programmes, particularly at level 2, have a number of key, common concerns including:

- A lack of clear understanding of individual learner progress, often as a result of ineffective tracking processes or regular progress reviews.

- Ineffective processes for triggering interventions to improve learner progress.

A **SWOT Analysis** is a tool that can support management, staff and governors or board members involved in the analysis. It provides prompts of what is effective and less effective in their study programme provision. It is often used for reviews, in preparation for a plan, that could be used for an audit, external assessments, quality checks etc. In fact a **SWOT** can be used for any planning or analysis activity which could impact future organisational planning and management decisions.

Suggestions on how to use this resource

Completing an effective SWOT analysis should be a group activity and it is essential to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the activity. The methodology, which is available in further detail on pages 3 & 4 of this document, can be summarised as follows:
- Stage 1 - identify an objective or goal.
- Stages 2, 3, 4 - discuss as identified in the 6-stage plan.
- Stage 5 - use the tips to assist in the construction of an effective SWOT analysis.
- Stage 6 - create an action plan for quality improvement.
- Discuss - do the actions in your quality improvement plan ensure as an organisation that improved learner progress is a key driver?

Developing reflective skills provides the ability to consider your own organisation's/department's performance and to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas that require improvement.

Intended impact

To support providers and practitioners in completing a robust evaluation of their study programme provision including all relevant stakeholders to:

- Determine any changes and improvements in the management of the progress of learners that will impact directly on learner engagement, improve retention rates and lead to more relevant progression.
- Identify appropriate action plans for improvements in the management of study programmes to drive learner progress across all vocational areas and/or technical routes.
- Reflect on current effectiveness and challenges to improve the planning and management of systems and procedures for sustained effective practice and improved learner progress.

A SWOT Analysis

SWOT is an acronym for **Strengths**, **Weaknesses, Opportunities** and **Threats.** It is an analytical framework that can help providers and practitioners to reflect on their current effectiveness and challenges to improve the planning, management and success of learner progress.

THE SWOT ANALYSIS TOOL

Stage 1: Before starting any planning or analysis process you need to have a clear goal or objective. For example: To improve the progress that learners make, what is it that you need to achieve or solve? Ensure that all key stakeholders buy into this objective or goal.

Stage 2: The SWOT analysis tool helps you to analyse and explore your position through both **internal** and **external** lenses.
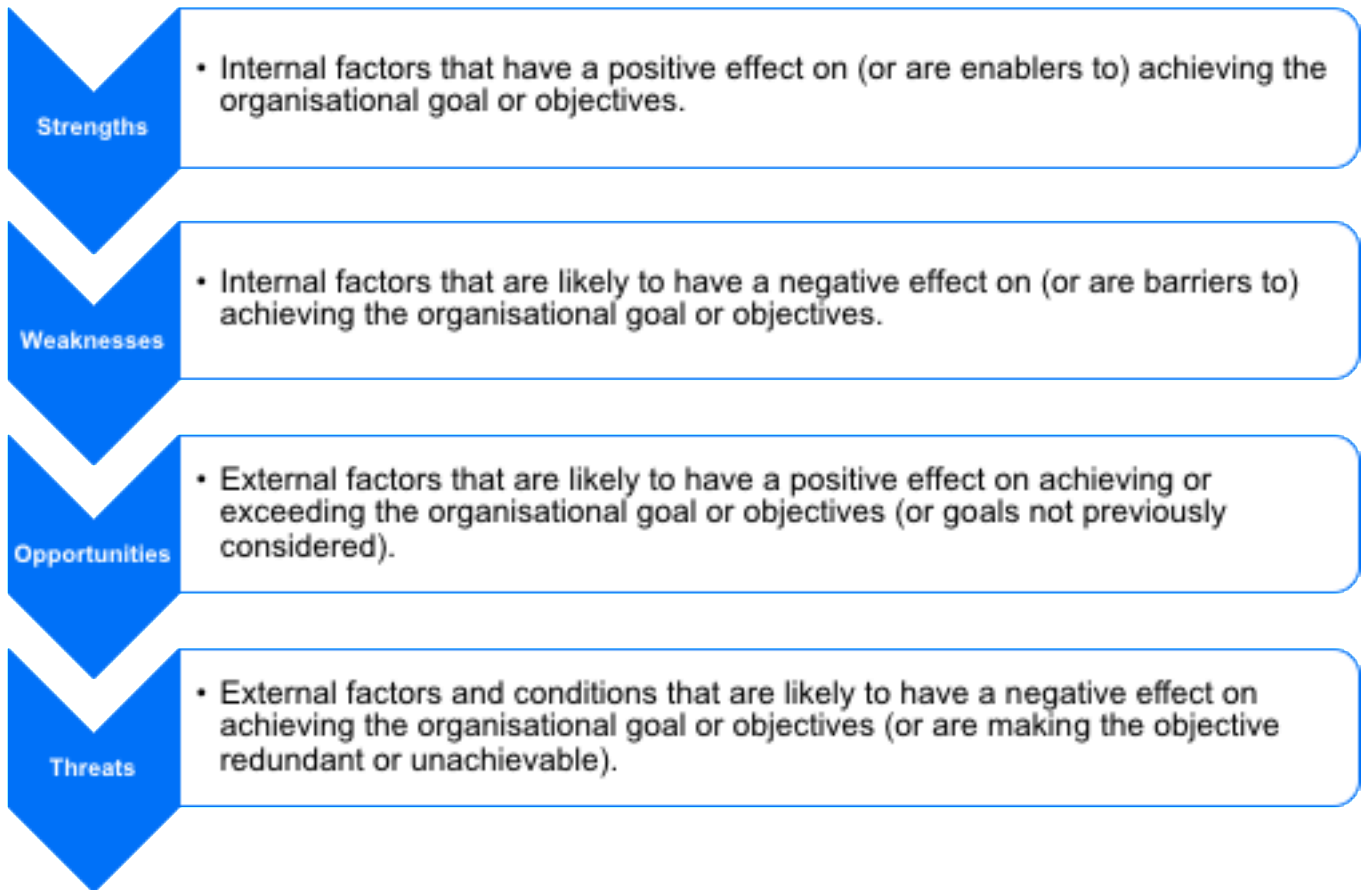
Completing the SWOT analysis will help you to:

- **Influence** and support the development and progress of your organisation.

- **Enable** your team to assess study programme readiness.

- **Improve** the delivery and quality of study programmes.

When you are identifying **strengths** and **weaknesses** you will be looking internally at your organisation, and the **internal** factors that are generally within your control. This means looking at the strengths that stem from your own environment. Similarly, weaknesses describe the areas in which the organisation is vulnerable or where they are not being as effective as they could be.

When you consider **opportunities** and **threats**, your focus will be **external**. You will be looking outside the organisation at the factors that either open up possibilities, or have the potential to, undermine your efforts. Factors in the **external** environment around an organisation are generally outside of your direct control.

Stage 3: Definitions.

Strengths
- Internal factors that have a positive effect on (or are enablers to) achieving the organisational goal or objectives.

Weaknesses
- Internal factors that are likely to have a negative effect on (or are barriers to) achieving the organisational goal or objectives.

Opportunities
- External factors that are likely to have a positive effect on achieving or exceeding the organisational goal or objectives (or goals not previously considered).

Threats
- External factors and conditions that are likely to have a negative effect on achieving the organisational goal or objectives (or are making the objective redundant or unachievable).

Stage 4: It is important that the four components of the SWOT analysis are considered together and not in isolation. This is because a factor can be both a **threat** and an **opportunity**, depending on the context and how you are able to respond to it.

Stage 5: Complete the SWOT analysis.

Use the tips below to assist in the construction of an effective SWOT analysis:

- Do not overestimate the strengths or underestimate the weaknesses of your project.
- Be realistic in your analysis.
- Be prepared with all the relevant facts and figures to evidence statements.
- Get input from all stakeholders involved.
- Use your competitors or similar organisations in your sector as a benchmark to assess your internal factors against.
- Keep your SWOT analysis short and simple – avoid unnecessary complexities.
- Use no more than 6 to 8 factors for each section.

SWOT ANALYSIS - sample questions to start the process

These sample questions are prompts and could be a strength or a weakness depending on the outcome.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Does the provider have a whole organisation approach to develop and improve the progress learners make?	Do all staff have a clear vision of what is required to ensure all learners make good progress?
Is the goal setting and tracking of individual learner progress regular and timely?	Are all relevant professionals (e.g. vocational, specialist and support practitioners) actively engaged to support the progress of learners?
Is individual learner progress tracked and reviewed to ensure learners achieve their goals and career destinations?	Are learners actively engaged to monitor and evaluate their progress as it happens?
Does the provider monitor rigorously the progress that learners make for each individual element of the study programme?	Is there evidence of ineffective individual learner progress tracking and regular reviews, and is this identified and actioned?
What excellent resources does the provider have to support improved learner progress?	Does the provider have sufficient resources to achieve the goal of supporting improved learner progress?
What stakeholder feedback do providers have that identifies successful learner progress and outcomes?	What stakeholder feedback do you have that identifies areas for improvement in learner progress and outcomes?
What can providers identify as effective practice in the planning and management of study programmes which promote high expectations of what a learner can achieve?	Are there any ineffective practices in the planning and management of study programme provision which can be improved to support learners to make the progress they are capable of?
Are learner starting points accurately assessed and recorded by staff involved in the study programme?	Are any effective assessment strategies used for initial assessment which clearly identify a learner's learning and support needs?

SWOT ANALYSIS - sample questions to start the process

These are prompts and could be an opportunity or a threat depending on the outcome.

Opportunities	Threats
What evidence is available to verify the provider's strengths in supporting learner progress?	All relevant professionals (e.g. vocational, specialist and support practitioners) are not actively engaged to support the progress of learners?
Can the provider identify factors that can drive improvements and implement change to support providers and practitioners in improving and articulating learner progress?	Does the provider have external financial restraints which impact on identified factors to support providers and practitioners to implement change to improve learner progress?
Are there current government policies that can bring positive change and improvement for the provider?	Which current government policy is the provider concerned about fulfilling or meeting to bring about change and improvement?
Are there any new technologies to improve provision and support learners to make better progress?	Does the organisation have a shortfall in new technologies which is impeding progress?
What market trends are opening up for the provider and learners to be involved in to promote employer engagement?	Are there any factors in the local community and economy might be negatively affecting employer engagement?
Are there gaps or demands in the current market that the organisation can fill to provide employment opportunities for learners?	Does the local economy have a negative impact on providing potential work opportunities for learners to access or aspire to?
Are there any factors in the local community and economy which are favourable, such as local grants?	Are there partnerships which are not working to support learner progress?
Are there any partnerships which can offer collaboration to improve opportunities for learners?	Could insufficient enrolments result in overstaffing?

SWOT ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

SWOT ANALYSIS	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Opportunities	**Threats**

Stage 6: Use the SWOT analysis to create an action plan.

Your SWOT analysis will give you a clear picture of the most important factors about your organisation that can:

- **Influence** and support development and progress.
- **Enable** you to assess study programme readiness.
- **Improve** the delivery and quality of your study programmes.

Consider:

- Are you doing everything you can to make the most of your **strengths** to evidence and record the progress of learners?
- Within your **weaknesses**, what could you do immediately to make a positive change, and improve study programme delivery and individual learner progress?
- Can any **weaknesses** be turned into active **opportunities** to support better monitoring and review of learner progress?
- The potential for prioritising and reviewing the **opportunities** for your organisation to maximise impact on the management of learner progress.
- Are any **threats** balanced by **opportunities** (e.g. T Levels may provide more opportunity for articulation of the progress a learner is making in each element of the programme)?

Supporting resource:

Use the 5 key principles from the resource 'What enables effective learner progress in study programmes' that is part of this toolkit of resources.