Building my skills

Resources to support student leader skill development

student hubs

Everybody can be a leader. Leadership is not about a specific role, instead it's about how you use your power, connections and voice to make change with others. There are four key skills to build your confidence in in order to develop as a leader:

- **Collaboration**
- **Communication**
- **Self awareness**
- **Problem solving**

This workbook complements the student skills audit by drawing upon training Student Hubs delivered to student leaders, as well as recommended further reading, to support you to take action to improve your skills as a leader in these four areas.

It's important to continue your growth journey as a student leader with three things in mind.

> ✓ **This workbook is aimed at:**
> University and College students
> Elected representatives
> Students' Union teams
> Early career university colleagues

Motivation

This is your passion and purpose. All motivations are valid, but it's important to be connected to yours.

A growth mindset

Your growth mindset is your openness to try new things, and your willingness to fail. It's about seeing situations as learning opportunities.

Curiosity

You need a curiosity to learn about others and yourself. This includes a willingness to reflect on where you are and what you're looking for.

Skill 1: Collaboration
Volunteer management

Volunteer management is the process of ensuring that volunteers under your direction have their needs met. It's supporting volunteers on their journey, through recruitment, training and beyond.

There are four key ingredients of volunteer management.

1. Communication
☐ Practise active listening
☐ Be consistent
☐ Be approachable
☐ Facilitate communication between others
☐ Be persevering

2. Motivation
☐ Make sure people have productive and challenging roles
☐ Understand the unique motivation of all volunteers
☐ Predict when motivation might need a boost
☐ Offer reward and recognition
☐ Build a team

3. Development
☐ Know your volunteers
☐ Use your experience, listen to theirs and learn from each other
☐ Give clear roles with room for challenges and growth
☐ When delegating set specific goals - focus on the what, not the how
☐ You can choose to step in or step back

4. Discipline
☐ Be consistent, firm and fair
☐ Be constructive not obstructive
☐ Set expectations and hold accountability
☐ Focus on the team
☐ Make the most of face-to-face time

The **Lifecycle of a Volunteer** outlines the seven stages in every volunteers' journey.
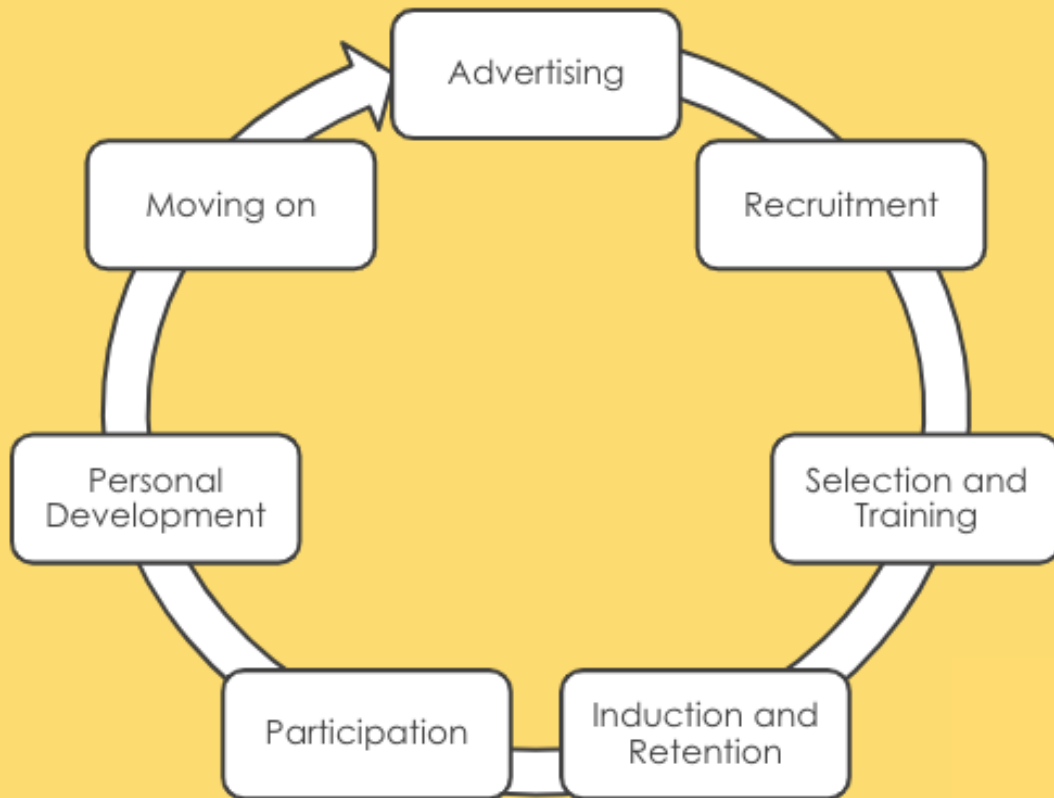
1. Advertising

At this stage ask yourself:

- Which platforms and methods are you using?
- What's been most effective and how are you tracking this?
- Are your materials audience appropriate?
- Does your advertising make the right impression?

2. Recruitment

At this stage ask yourself:

- What is the activity?
- What is the value of the activity? *To both the volunteer and service user*
- How do volunteers get involved? And is the process clear and accessible?
- What experience is necessary?
- Where can volunteers get more information?
- Is there an opportunity for volunteer development? *i.e. to take more responsibility as a leader*
- How much time are volunteers expected to contribute? And when?
- Where is the activity held?
- What costs might volunteers incur?
- What training and support is provided?

3. Selection and training

At this stage ask yourself:

- How many sessions do volunteers have to come to? And how long will they last?
- What do volunteers get to evidence their training?
- What extra resources do volunteers need?
- Is the venue used accessible?

4. Induction and retention

Make sure you think about:

- The length of time between training and induction
- The information shared at the induction
- Key points of volunteer drop out, and what you can to do mitigate against this and prepare for it
- Clarity about activity logistics including expected commitment, expenses reimbursement, communication expectations and more

5. Participation

Make sure you:

- Make volunteers feel welcome
- Get to know your volunteers personally
- Have a key contact point and method of communication
- Build a team, with dedicated time for socialising
- Set and celebrate small goals
- Set boundaries for yourself. Think about your working hours, how you can delegate and where you can get help and support

6. Personal development

At this stage ask yourself:

- How can you help your volunteers become more confident?
- How can you upskill your volunteers?
- Who is showing leadership potential? And how can you offer them more responsibility?

7. Moving on

Make sure you:

- Celebrate volunteers who are moving on
- Encourage volunteers to take leadership responsibility in the future
- Signpost to other opportunities, networks and support
- Make it easy for volunteers to opt out of communications
- Take time to understand why volunteers are moving on
- End things on a good note, word of mouth is key!

Let's try: Put your learnings into practice. Work through the four scenarios below and note down your initial thoughts, intended outcome and actions to take.

Scenario 1: A committee member who is normally really reliable has not turned up to the last two meetings. You have not had a response from emails and are getting close to project deadlines.

Scenario 2: A volunteer on your project tells you they have fallen out with another volunteer and do not think they are pulling their weight. They feel demotivated to be involved in the project.

Scenario 3: Your programme receives some poor feedback "Project was fun, but I feel like I did not make any friends."

Scenario 4: Two weeks before your event you have an academic deadline, you're tired, the risk assessment is not written, and a volunteer has forgotten to book something vital.

Further reading
- [Collaboration Lab: From conflict to connection, faster](#) - LifeLabs Learning ([webinar summary sheet](#))
- [What Is Psychological Safety, Really?](#) - HBR
- [How to get serious about diversity and inclusion in the workplace](#) - Janet Stovall
- [Inclusive Leadership Lab: Model and amplify behaviors of inclusion](#) - LifeLabs Learning
- [A Simple Exercise to Help You Check Your Biases](#) - Ana Gupta, HBR
- [How can leaders ignite the best thinking in others?](#) - Bradley Shearer
- [Learning to Delegate as a First-Time Line Manager](#) - Shanna Hocking, HBR

Skill 2: Communication
Public speaking

Reflect: What excites you about public speaking? Do you have any fears?

Top tips to build your confidence as a speaker
- Be yourself
- Make good eye contact
- Structure your thoughts
- Keep it simple
- Project your voice
- Speak from the heart
- Pitch, pace, power and pause
- Be animated
- Keep to time
- Practise, practise, practise!

The 5 Ss of public speaking is a tool to support you to present with confidence.

Stride: walk to the platform or space with confidence. Your speech begins the moment you are seen, rather than the moment you begin to speak.

Stand: Allow the audience to focus on you. Do not distract them by moving around.

Smile: Smiling relaxes the audience and engages them. It may also relax you!

Speak: Be ready to start speaking. Remember, you are in control!

Stay: When you have finished take your time before leaving the stage. Look around, nod, smile or take your applause.

A key skill that strong public speakers have is **listening**. By practicing your listening skills you will be come an effective communicator and leader, you can also provide feedback to support other speakers to develop. To be a great listener you should:

- **Show that you are listening** by nodding and smiling. This will support the speaker and help you to focus on what is being said.
- **Genuinely try to listen**. Doing this will make you more aware.
- **Be interested in others**. Listen with curiosity to learn.
- **Tune into the speaker** and give them your full attention, trying not be distracted by others.
- **Make the speaker feel important** by taking an interest in what they have to say.
- **Stay open**, allowing the speaker to share uninterrupted even if you don't agree with everything they are saying.
- **Offer feedback when appropriate.** Using a model like WIN (Wonderful, Improve, Nice) to share clear and useful feedback. What did they do well? How could they improve? What else was nice or effective?

Let's try: Put on a one minute timer and talk our loud about your favourite thing to do to relax. Reflect about how that felt and which tips felt most useful.

Further reading
- [How do you engage student volunteers?](#) - TeamKinetic
- [Volunteer Motivation & Retention](#) - Students' Union UCL
- [How Coaching Works](#) - Wellcoaches
- [A Simple Way to Connect with Your Team Members](#) - Carolee Gearhart (HBR)
- [10 tips for active listening](#) - British Heart Foundation
- [Why charity sector leaders need more influence](#) - Clore Social Leadership
- [Negotiation Skills – a universal requirement: five top tips](#) - Uday Thakkar (Directory of Social Change)
- [How to Sound Smart in your Tedx Talk](#) - Will Stephen
- [How to Own the Room](#) - Viv Groskop

Skill 3: Self awareness
Resilience and wellbeing

Stress is a natural part of life, therefore managing stress effectively and healthily is important to ensure it does not negatively impact upon your health, wellbeing or work.

The stress bucket shows how stress accumulates, and how our coping mechanisms can prevent us from becoming overwhelmed.
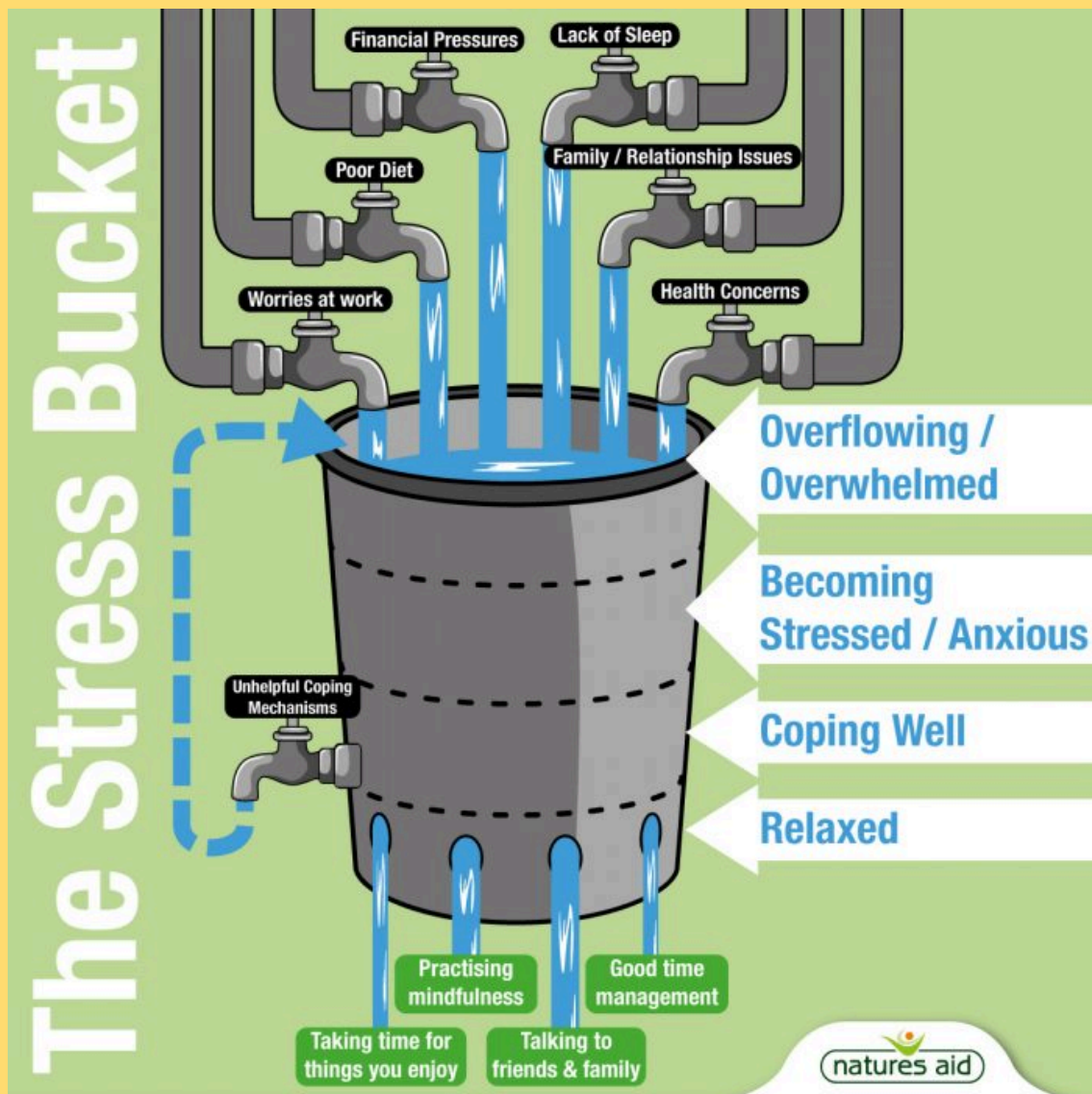
Stress impacts us all in unique ways. It's important to understand what happens to you when you're feeling stressed - so that you, and those close to you, can understand how stress is impacting you. These are your **wellbeing warning signs**.

Wellbeing warning signs could include:
- Low energy
- Headaches
- Aches and pains
- Difficulty sleeping
- Upset stomach
- Changes in mood
- Changes in appetite
- Lack of focus on tasks
- Turning up late to, or cancelling, commitments
- Reduced interest in hobbies
- Feeling anxious

Reflect: What are your wellbeing warning signs? How can you share them with family, friends and peers?

We also all have drivers. Our drivers motivate us, but if they put too much pressure on us it may create stress. The five drivers are: **try hard**; **be perfect**; **be pleasing**; **be strong**; and **hurry up**. Once you have identified your drivers ask yourself:

- In what ways do your drivers operate in your life?
- What effect do your drivers have on you as a student leader?
- How might your drivers contribute to feeling overwhelmed?
- Do you ever give these kinds of messages to other people in your life? What impact might that have?


Resilience is what allows you to process stress, and move through it. Lots of things build your resilience such as taking time for things you enjoy, practicing mindfulness, talking to friends and family and good time management.

We also may have less healthy coping mechanisms known as numbing behaviours like over exercising, watching too much TV or drinking more alcohol. These behaviours may help us manage stress in the moment, but won't remove it in the long term.

Let's try: Understand your resilience by mapping out your roots - at least three things that make you feel good and rooted - and your fruits - the effects of doing these things.
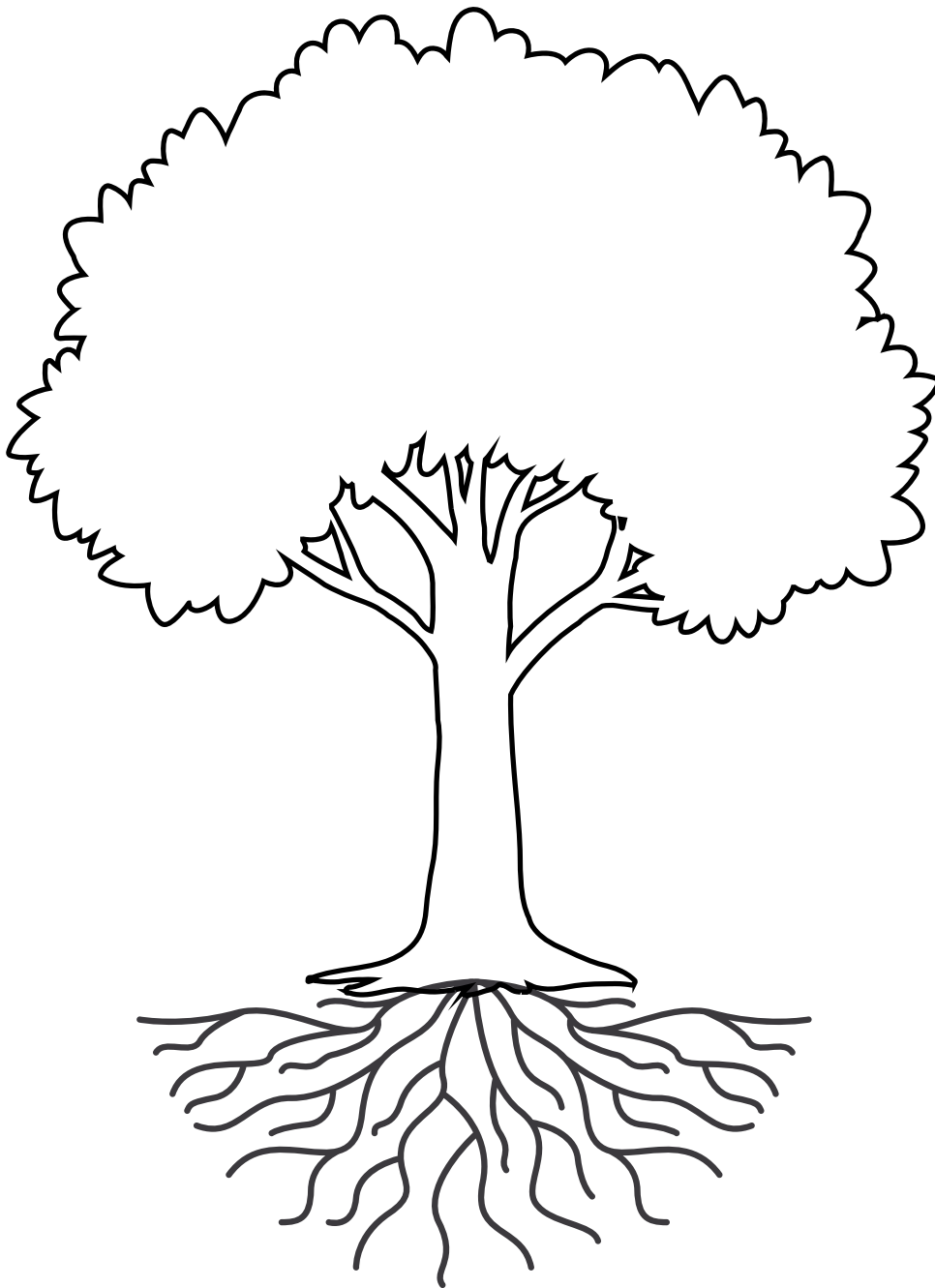
You can use your understanding of your roots, and their fruits, to map out your days, weeks and months. Make sure you identify potential stress early on using your wellbeing warning signs, and you prioritise making space to practice your roots regularly.

Further reading
- [4 Models of reflection – core concepts for reflective thinking](#) - Open University
- [Mental health and wellbeing](#) resources - Student Space
- [Healthy Boundaries, A guide from our shared exploration](#) - Conscious Leaders Circle
- [Set Boundaries, Find Peace](#) - Nedra Glover Tawwab
- [Courage as a Skill](#) - Kathleen K. Reardon (HBR)
- [How can I improve my self-esteem?](#) - Mind
- [How to build your confidence - and spark it in others](#) - Brittany Packnett Cunningham
- [Five tips to make the most of your university experience](#) - Justine Baek (Times Higher Education)

Skill 4: Problem solving
Project management

A project
An individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned to achieve a particular aim.

Project management
The application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements.

Projects are unique and specific, they have limited resources, and they introduce an element of risk. For you a project might be delivering an event, setting up a new volunteering activity, running a social or hitting a deadline.

Project management is the framework, toolkit or methodology applied to deliver a project on time, on budget and to a high quality. With effective project management in place you can accomplish more with less, maintain good relationships with everyone involved and feel confident that you will achieve your goals!

Project management is a cycle - throughout your project you should repeat the plan, do and review stages. To do this you may like to use some, or all, of the tools outlined in this section of the workbook.

The Plan, Do, Review model **outlines the three stages of project management**

Plan ⟶ **Do** ⟶ **Review**

Plan

Map out your project using the project canvas

The project canvas is a collaborative tool you can use to visually map out a project, as an individual or in a team. We recommend printing it off on an A3 piece of paper, and using sticky notes, or coloured pens, to pull your plan together. There are four sections involved.

1. Goal setting

Identify the purpose, scope and success criteria of your project. Ask yourself why you are even doing the project, what is included and what success looks like.

MoSCoW is a tool to help you identify the scope of your project and prioritise outcomes.

This project **Must** have...
This project **Should** have...
This project **Could** have...
This project **Won't** have...

Top Tip: Make sure your success criteria are <u>SMARTIE</u>: Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive and Equitable.

2. Timeframe

What are the milestones, actions and outcome of your project? Milestones are the big achievements along the way, identify what you will have achieved at the one week or one month stage if your project is on track. Actions then break down each milestone into each individual task which needs to be completed to achieve success. Finally the outcome is the end milestone - the final result of your project.

A [Gantt chart](#) supports you to map out what the actions are, when they need to be done, who is responsible and how long each task is expected to take.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Task 1	███	███				
Task 2		███	███	███		
Task 3			███			
Task 4				███	███	
Task 5					☐	

Team 1	Team 2	Team 3

3. People

Identify the project team who are required to deliver actions and milestones, the stakeholders who are everyone impacted or involved with the project and the users who are those who will benefit from the project.

A **RACI matrix** helps you to identify who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed at each stage of the project.

R	Responsible	Who is responsible for the work, at least one person
A	Accountable	Who is accountable for the work, only one person
C	Consulted	Who is consulted about the work
I	Informed	Who is informed about the work

Top Tip: Create a communication plan to outline how you are going to keep everyone updated throughout your project. For each communication be sure to explicitly note **who** is responsible, **when** they will do it, **how** they will share it and **what** will be included.

4. Environment

The environment of your project includes the resources you have available to you to deliver your outcome, the constraints you will face and the risks that may arise.

Top Tip: Carry out a project premortem to identify what might go wrong before it happens. Record your risks, and actions to manage them, in a risk register and keep it updated throughout.

A budget helps you allocate and manage financial resources available for your project.

Expenditure	Total	Notes
Travel	£9	3x £3 bus tickets
Promotion	£5	50x 10p fliers
Refreshments	£10	5x £1 soft drinks; 5x £1 biscuits
Total:	£24	

Do

Time to put your plan into action

The most important thing in the do stage is maintaining motivation. You have your plan and it's time to put it into action. To stay motivated:
- Ensure your plan is realistic, so that individual expectations are understood from the start
- Have regular meetings or reflection sessions to give space for progress updates and problem solving
- Stay focused on the goal of the project
- Celebrate successes along the way, no matter how big or small

Make sure you are executing your communications plan to keep everyone updated and engaged throughout!

Top Tip: As you are working through your plan you may like to use an online tool like [Trello](#), [Asana](#) or [Wrike](#) to tick off progress, or a shared online platform like [Google Drive](#) or [slack](#) to centrally store and share documents, ideas and challenges.

Review

Take time regularly to reflect on project progress

Ask yourself:
- What did we achieve? *i.e. what outcomes, milestones and success criteria have we hit?*
- How did we achieve it? *i.e. did we stick to the project plan? If yes, what worked well? If no, how and why did we adapt?*
- Why did we achieve it? *i.e. what successes and challenges did we encounter along the way?*
- What lessons did we learn for next time?

Top tips

- ✓ Do Involve the project team at every stage
- ✓ Do support your project team with planning, positivity and proactivity
- ✓ Do accept support from Hub staff and other committee members
- ✓ Do allocate enough time for communications

- ⊗ Don't be bureaucratic
- ⊗ Don't ignore challenges
- ⊗ Don't over-worry
- ⊗ Don't underestimate the importance of buy-in

Further reading
- [10 Exercises to Build your Creative Confidence](#) - Saige Perry (IDEO)
- [Take a look at a problem from all sides with the Six Thinking Hats technique](#) - BiteSize Learning
- [4 Ways to Develop your Strategic Thinking Skills](#) - Tim Stobierski (Harvard Business School)
- [Start With 'Why'](#) - Simon Sinek
- [How to Make Decisions](#) - Melanie Bell (Mindtools)
- [Leading Through Conflict: Three Learning Strategies For Leaders](#) - Anna Shields (Forbes)

student hubs