

ILLUSTRATIVE SAMPLE PAPER

Study planning at university

A literature-based conceptual paper on
learning objectives, tasks and feedback

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ORIENTATION

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DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

Additional lists

List of figures

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List of tables

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List of abbreviations

AI - Artificial intelligence

PDF - Portable Document Format

About this example

The contents and lists are deliberately shown in full. In an actual sample paper, the length and required lists depend on the topic, structure and your formatting requirements.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Starting point and objectives

A study week often begins with a long list: organise lecture notes, solve exercises, read a text and clarify open questions. The list describes activities. It does not yet show what outcome a study session should produce. This example therefore distinguishes between an activity and a learning objective that can be checked.

The guiding question is: How can a study plan clearly connect objectives, learning activities and feedback? It starts from Zimmerman's process-based understanding of self-regulated learning: learners direct their thinking and actions towards their own goals (Zimmerman, 2002, pp. 65-66). The text applies selected concepts to a constructed course scenario; it does not test an effectiveness hypothesis of its own.

The starting point is a fictional course with three topic areas and an upcoming practice exam. The fictional student has six hours per week available for studying. This amount of time is an assumption within the example, not a recommendation or an observed measurement.

This paper is an illustrative, literature-based conceptual study. Three deliberately selected scholarly articles support the perspectives of self-regulation, learning techniques and feedback. The selection is not a systematic research review. Chapter 2 brings the concepts together, Chapter 3 develops an original application example and Chapter 4 discusses its scope.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.2 Terms and scope

A learning objective in this example is a performance that can be described in concrete terms. "Read chapter two" is an activity. "Explain opportunity cost using an example of my own" describes an outcome. A short task can be used to check whether this outcome has been achieved.

Learning content is the subject of the activity. It may include definitions, calculation methods or relationships between concepts. A learning task connects content and performance: it calls for an explanation, a calculation or the application of a concept to a new case.

Feedback is understood here as information about a performance or understanding already demonstrated (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81). In the example, it takes the form of a comparison between a solution process and an assessment criterion. A feeling of familiarity cannot replace that comparison. Subject-specific correction and documented self-assessment are possible forms; the quality of the criteria still needs to be checked.

The scope remains narrow. The model organises one example week; it neither diagnoses individual learning difficulties nor makes claims about exam success. Its suitability for a specific degree programme is not assumed either. That would need to be checked against the actual course requirements.

2. AN ORIGINAL PLANNING MODEL

2.1 From course content to a task

Zimmerman (2002, pp. 67-68) distinguishes forethought, performance and self-reflection as phases of a cyclical process. This distinction provides the theoretical starting point. The four-step scheme below is an original teaching-oriented application, not an instrument tested by Zimmerman. First, course content, available materials and open questions are organised.

The second step is to formulate an objective that can be checked. It should be focused enough to address in one study session. For the fictional topic of cost accounting, it might be: "I can distinguish fixed and variable costs in three situations of my own choosing and explain my classification."

The third step assigns a task to the objective. Simply repeating the definition is not enough for this objective, because a justification is also required. The task must therefore include situations whose classification can be explained. Matching the objective and task is the central idea of the model.

The fourth step evaluates the work. The record includes not only correct or incorrect answers, but also the point where uncertainty arises. This leads to the next task. The model connects planning and feedback in a repeatable process.

2. AN ORIGINAL PLANNING MODEL

2.2 Feedback as a guide to decisions

Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 86) organise feedback around three questions: "Where am I going?", "How am I going?" and "Where to next?". This direct quotation connects the goal, current progress and next steps. For this example, it informs the decision to record a follow-up task alongside every piece of feedback.

In the fictional exercise, the student explains the terms correctly but confuses fixed costs with costs already paid in one case. The feedback therefore addresses the criterion used: in this example, classification depends on whether costs vary with the activity level being considered, not on when a payment is made.

A useful note describes the error and the next attempt. "Study more" remains vague. "Compare two cases with different activity levels" names a concrete action. The note thus has a purpose in the next study plan.

Linking feedback to a follow-up task is an original application of the feedback framework described above. It can be justified, but it is not evidence of effectiveness. Whether learners complete the task and benefit from it would need to be tested in a suitable study. A literature base and an empirical evaluation serve different purposes.

3. APPLICATION TO THE EXAMPLE COURSE

3.1 A constructed study week

For the application, six hours are spread across three sessions. The first session provides an overview and selects tasks. In the second, the tasks are completed without consulting the solutions. The third is reserved for evaluation and another attempt at selected questions.

Dunlosky et al. (2013, pp. 4-5) rate practice testing and distributed practice as learning techniques with particularly broad utility. This supports the use of several sessions and independent practice phases in the example week. The specific allocation of six hours is an original assumption, however; the review does not establish it as an optimal amount of time.

The constructed course materials contain concepts, short case exercises and worked calculations. Each task is linked to the objective it addresses. A topic that has only been read can thus be distinguished from one for which a task has already been solved independently.

The plan remains adjustable. If a task takes longer, the evaluation is not silently dropped. Instead, the scope of the next topic is adjusted. The example illustrates a transparent decision between the amount covered and the depth of engagement.

3. APPLICATION TO THE EXAMPLE COURSE

3.2 Evaluating a practice task

The fictional practice task asks the student to compare two courses of action and justify the chosen alternative. Three assessment criteria are defined: select relevant information, make the solution process understandable and relate the result to the original question.

Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 90) distinguish, among other things, feedback on the task and on the process used to complete it. In the constructed case, the result is plausible, but the reasoning is incomplete. The correction therefore separates the final answer from the solution process and identifies the missing assumption. This feedback is an original example, not a research finding taken from the source.

The correction produces a concrete practice task: the student rewrites the reasoning and highlights every assumption used. She then checks whether the conclusion still holds if one assumption changes. This task is part of the constructed example and is not an official exam assessment.

If no official model solution is available, self-defined assessment criteria and remaining uncertainties must be stated explicitly. Subject-specific correction can provide guidance; it does not replace the binding assessment criteria of the examining university.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Limitations of the example

This paper connects three selected perspectives without systematically reviewing the research. Dunlosky et al. (2013, pp. 4-5) examine learning techniques across different learning conditions, groups, materials and tasks. A finding must therefore not be applied to every university task without checking the specific context. That external check is absent from this course scenario.

The mere existence of feedback does not guarantee its quality. Unclear criteria or subject-specific errors may lead to an unsuitable next task. For real applications, the underlying content and assessment standards must therefore be checked carefully.

The constructed week contains no observed data. It supports neither success rates nor reliable claims about time savings. It illustrates a possible structure only. An empirical test would first need to define the outcomes to be measured and how alternative explanations would be considered.

The text therefore distinguishes research findings, original design decisions and fictional application. The sources support the selection of certain concepts. They establish neither the effectiveness of this particular scheme nor exam success. Further development would need a broader literature base, documented selection criteria and testable success criteria.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.2 Answering the guiding question

The guiding question concerned a clear connection between objectives, time and feedback. The example answers it with a simple mapping: every selected topic has an objective that can be checked, every session has a suitable task and every evaluation has a documented next step.

Zimmerman's cyclical view connects reflection on one learning episode to preparation for the next (Zimmerman, 2002, pp. 68-69). In this original model, a documented follow-up task makes that connection concrete. The study plan serves as an adjustable working tool. This is a theoretically grounded application and should be distinguished from an empirically tested recommendation.

This does not imply that the model is superior to alternatives. The paper presents a possible line of reasoning and states its limitations. A specific course would require additional task formats, requirements and available materials.

The example ends where it began: a general intention becomes a concrete question, the question becomes a structured process and that process produces a justified next step. This sample aims to make that structure clear and to inspire independent work.

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

References

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Citation style and original materials

Author-date citations with page references appear in the text; page numbers refer to the printed journal pages. The direct quotation retains its original wording. DOI links lead to the bibliographic records.

The course scenario, time allocation and practice answer are original teaching examples. No participants were studied and no learning outcomes were collected. The three publications are a targeted selection, not a systematic literature review.

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