

Guide to Discussing a VELA Plan

Writing It Down

- ✓ Talk about why it's useful to document in detail. Remind the student that if they wish to assess their progress and gain help and advice, having a detailed and precise picture of what they wish to achieve, why and how, will help you, and then assess progress and establish reasons for problems, which may occur in the future. Explain that's why it's important to spend time on writing up a plan, discussing it, making changes (if necessary) and using diaries to document future learning.

Objective

- ✓ Ask the student to read out their objective so you understand what their aims and expectations are for this particular project.
- ✓ Check to ensure that carrying out a VELA Plan project is appropriate to student's objectives and expectations. Where the objective is not clear or a student is hesitant, probe as much as possible. (It may be that the student needs another solution like going to the dentist to become confident about speaking instead of mumbling, rather than spending hours on pronunciation and presentations...)
- ✓ Check to see links between the strategies and materials they've chosen and what they've written as their objective statement. Their 'problems' and 'expectations' should link logically with the strategy/material choices they've made. They should have answered most of the question prompts listed at the top under 'Consider'.

Time Allocation

- ✓ Notice how many months/weeks the student has allocated for their learning. You will need to remember this when examining the strategies and materials chosen (i.e. if they have lots of strategies and materials the project could take many months)
- ✓ Make sure the student has thought about where they will study and how they will access materials. If they have chosen to study on the weekend but the materials are in the SAC, they will not be able to use those materials.
- ✓ Notice how many hours per week they have allocated and which days they have chosen. Ask the student to consider a spread of days and begin to think about what they might do on the different days.
- ✓ Check to see if the student has thought about returning to see you at the Advice Desk to discuss work and progress and if so, what day the student can see you.

Strategies & Materials

- ✓ Ask the student if they understand what FTG is. They should be able to explain to you how the different kinds of practice work.
- ✓ Remind the student of the importance of balance: Doing only FP can lead to boredom because there's no context/real reason for learning. Doing only TP can be too challenging because it's like taking a test without first having studied the subject. Doing only GP can lead to frustration because no problems are addressed so progress and a sense of achievement is very difficult to determine.
- ✓ Sometimes the student may only have looked at the summary of the strategy. It's important to discuss the details of the strategy and how following the 'recipe' initially might be a good idea in order to ensure that they are confident and able to adapt it later if necessary.
- ✓ Sometimes a student will feel that it's too time consuming to follow the strategy in detail however, the fact that they are experiencing problems may be the result of not studying in a logical systematic way, so again it's worth discussing old habits and comparing them with what the strategies suggest
- ✓ This kind of discussion can often help identify where problems lie and it's worth bringing this to the student's attention so they can consider changing their old habits and seeing if new methods of learning make a difference
- ✓ Remind the student that if they have their own material that they wish to use, they should edit it in. You may wish to make suggestions and or direct students to VELA Browse to change materials and /or strategies if necessary.

Focused Practice (FP)

- ✓ There is one focused practise strategy for each pathway. Read through the strategy with them to see that they are quite clear about how they will be using the materials they have selected.

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- ✓ Look at the materials they have chosen (between 3-5 different materials..., totally up to them and dependent on how much time they allocate). Can they use these materials with the strategy?
- ✓ Where are the materials? In the SAC (which is only open on weekdays; if they are doing their learning on weekends this will be a problem - see above).
- ✓ Ask them if they have physically looked at the materials. Did they examine the books? Did they go to the web sites and check them out? If not, they should do this before committing to the plan.

Transfer Practice (TP)

- ✓ Unlike FP, there are usually quite a few different strategies to choose from. Examine the strategy or strategies they have selected and ask them why they made that choice. This will give the student the opportunity to show links between their choices and their objective. If there are any illogical gaps you could point them out and discuss alternative choices.
- ✓ Look at the materials they plan to use. Can they use them with the strategy? Ask why they chose those particular ones.

General Practice (GP)

- ✓ Look at the materials they plan to use. Can they use them with the strategy? Ask why they chose those particular ones.
- ✓ This is the 'fun' part of the Plan. They should pick as many strategies as they like. The materials will be the same as those found in the TP section, however they should understand that they will be using them differently

Assessing Progress and VELA Diary

- ✓ This should relate to their objectives and expectations. It should also be seen as a compliment to the strategies they have chosen
- ✓ Check to see if they have thought about *how* to assess the progress they make. If they have simply ticked off all the suggestions made in Vela without modifying them then they haven't given this section the consideration it requires.
- ✓ Discuss how they can modify the Vela suggestions to something specific to them and their plan. Ask them to consider suggestions in the strategies they chose like checking their work with an adviser.
- ✓ It's useful here to remind the student of the importance of documenting their learning and introduce them to VELA Diary.