



University of East Anglia

---

## **APPRENTICESHIPS**

### **UEA Employer Mentor Handbook 2025/6**

## Contents

1. Introduction to Degree Apprenticeships Mentoring .....	3
2. The Apprenticeship Mentor .....	3
Being an Effective Mentor.....	3
3. Apprenticeship Standards .....	4
4. Requirements of Apprenticeship Mentoring .....	5
Being Reflective.....	5
Conducting a Mentoring Session.....	5
Progress Reviews.....	6
The End Point Assessment (EPA).....	7
Off- the- Job Training (OTJT) .....	7
5. Supporting the Apprentice.....	8
Capacity.....	8
Networking.....	9
Health and Safety .....	9
Welfare and Safeguarding .....	9
<i>Appendix 1</i> .....	10
<i>Appendix 2</i> .....	13
<i>Appendix 3</i> .....	14

## 1. Introduction to Degree Apprenticeships Mentoring

Welcome to the UEA Apprenticeship programme and thank you very much for agreeing to become an apprenticeship mentor.

Being a mentor to an apprentice is a significant role and one which is essential to supporting an apprentice through the learning process. We hope that you will find this a rewarding experience and one that you will benefit greatly from.

We hope that this handbook will give you an overview of the apprenticeship journey and help you recognise how and why you can support your apprentice most effectively. However, the Apprenticeships Team and course teams are always available to help if you have any further questions.

This handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- The Employer Apprenticeship Handbook
- The Apprentice Handbook
- The Apprenticeship Course Handbook

## 2. The Apprenticeship Mentor

A mentor is a colleague from the same organisation as an apprentice who is experienced in the role and occupation the apprentice is training for. They are someone who will be able to provide a guiding hand through informal and formal meetings and help them complete appropriate work-based training to benefit achievement and completion of the apprenticeship. Throughout the apprenticeship journey, the mentor should encourage the apprentice to reflect on their experiences and learning in order to successfully progress.

Ideally, the mentor will **not** be the apprentice's line manager, supervisor or team leader. The mentor needs to be a person who is more senior than the apprentice, and someone the apprentice can feel comfortable with in order to have those honest and confidential conversations. However, the mentor should be someone best placed to understand the requirements of the apprentice's role, be able to recognise challenges, including time management and obstacles, and provide suitable solutions and support.

### Being an Effective Mentor

The role of mentor should be one that is able to support an apprentice through their learning journey in terms of meeting the work-based requirements of their apprenticeship and providing the guidance and support to manage the obstacles and challenges along the way. An effective mentor will be able to:

- Understand the requirements and demands of independent learning and support the apprentice in having the time and space to engage with this.
- Recognise the individual needs of the apprentice, in terms of employment, learning needs and practical needs, and be able to guide them appropriately through challenging and coaching.

- Draw on their own position within the organisation to ensure apprentices have access to opportunities and resources to support completion of the apprenticeship.
- Understand the role the apprentice holds in the organisation to be able to support suitable project opportunities which would be relevant for work placement projects to meet assessment and standard requirements.
- Identify and support professional development opportunities.
- Be approachable and honest in challenge and feedback with the apprentice in order to provide the best support.
- Fully understand the apprenticeship standard(s) and the course curriculum in order to best support the apprentice through work placement opportunities and linking theory to practice.
- Hold regular informal meetings with apprentices to touch base and monitor progress.
- Supervise the apprentice in monitoring progress, including module and course grades, attendance and completion of the Off- the- Job training.
- Support the apprentice to prepare for Progress Review meetings, helping them to reflect on progress and learning, and identify SMART targets for development.
- Attend Progress Review meetings every 3 calendar months across the duration of the apprenticeship.
- Support the apprentice in developing the skills for their role, wider skills and knowledge for progression and to be able to complete the apprenticeship.
- Assess the apprentice's suitability to progress to the End Point Assessment (EPA).
- Inspire and motivate the apprentice to consider their career path and long-term opportunities.
- Be a positive role model.

### 3. Apprenticeship Standards

Each apprenticeship is designed to ensure that an apprentice achieves a set of standards relevant to the industry in which they are employed.

The standards of an apprenticeship are developed by employers in the industry, training providers and Skills England (previously known as the *Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education, or IFATE*). They are supported by an assessment plan, designed to best demonstrate achievement of the standards for the specific industry. All standards can be found on the [Skills England website](#).

Each apprenticeship standard is based on an occupational profile of the role and responsibilities of a particular level of work and lists the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSB's) relevant to that role. The KSB's are often broken into groups called 'duties'. Typically, knowledge is delivered through the course modules and will often be referred to as the theoretical learning. Skills and behaviours are usually developed in the workplace, although these can also overlap into the theoretical learning opportunities when addressing concepts such as British Values, Personal or Professional Development (PPD).

The apprentice is required to demonstrate competency against the KSB's in order to complete the apprenticeship.

## **4. Requirements of Apprenticeship Mentoring**

### **Being Reflective**

In order to progress through a degree apprenticeship into a professional role there is an expectation that the apprentice will develop as a reflective practitioner. This will be developed through their course work, where they will be expected to evaluate and critically analyse, but also through their overall apprenticeship skills development where they will be expected to consider the consequences of actions and the impact of these.

As a mentor, you should be encouraging apprentices to reflect on their actions and consider developments as a matter of course; this is a key element to becoming professional in your chosen field. In some apprenticeship programmes reflective practice will be a key requirement and in all apprenticeship programmes it is expected that apprentices will demonstrate their skills and progress in reflective thinking and practice through the Progress Review submission.

It is not unusual for people to struggle with the concept of reflective thinking, or the value of it. In your role of mentor, you will be able to help the apprentice acquire the skills of reflective thinking and reflective practice through your own approach to mentoring.

By using a challenging and coaching approach, you will encourage the apprentice to think about what has happened, what they've done and how they could improve. [Appendix 1](#) provides examples of three simple models for reflective practice and learning which could be very easily adopted in the workplace or learning environment. These are:

1. Kolb's Learning Cycle (1984)
2. Atkins and Murphy's Reflective Cycle (1994), amended from Gibbs (1988)
3. What, So What and Now What! amended from Rolfe et al (2001).

Your apprentice will probably develop understanding of far more sophisticated models and if so, they should be encouraged to use these.

### **Conducting a Mentoring Session**

You will spend a lot of time with the apprentice either in informal or formal meetings. Although as the mentor you are the expert, mentoring or coaching is not about telling people how to do the job; the focus is much more on challenging and questioning people to encourage them to find their own solutions. [Appendix 2](#) and [Appendix 3](#) provide an overview of two models for leading a mentoring meeting- these are the GROW model and the Push/ Pull model.

**The GROW model** allows the mentor to ask the apprentice to think about what their goals are and then consider the realistic opportunities for achieving these. During

this process they should be challenged to identify how and when they will achieve their goal. The model is broken into four stages with discussion points to engage with at each stage. As the mentor, the responsibility is to ask challenging questions at each stage to ensure that the apprentice has really thought through the realities of the situation and considered all eventualities. In the early stages of the apprenticeship, discussions can be gentle, but they should become increasingly challenging as the apprentice matures through the programme. The GROW module might also be used as a reflective practice model by the apprentice.

**The Push/ Pull model** of managing a mentoring meeting allows the mentor to start off by being directive and 'pushing' the apprentice to setting goals and solving problems. Gradually, though, as the apprentice progresses through their journey the mentor should be using a 'pull' approach, challenging and encouraging the apprentice to find their own solutions and set their own goals. This model might be more suitable in the first year of an apprenticeship.

## Progress Reviews

Every apprentice will start their programme by completing an Initial Needs Assessment (INA). Through this process existing experience and prior learning of the KSB's will be evidenced and will impact the duration of the apprenticeship and content for each individual.

The INA is used to inform the first Progress Review meeting for an apprentice. Throughout the apprenticeship Progress Review meetings will **take place every 3 calendar months**<sup>1</sup> between the apprentice, the Apprenticeship Adviser and the mentor. These meetings are designed to review the academic and vocational progress of the apprentice, identify areas for development, opportunities for projects and set SMART targets to facilitate successful completion of the apprenticeship.

The Progress Review meetings will revolve around progress against the apprenticeship standards, the duties and/ or the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSB's). The KSB's are addressed in all aspects of the apprenticeship and achievement against these must be recorded to ensure the apprentice is progressing appropriately and building towards the EPA.

The mentor and apprentice should meet before the planned Progress Review meeting to discuss progress, identify areas of concern, draft SMART targets for continuation and agree opportunities for development of KSB's. This should be written up as a reflective statement on the Progress Review meeting form. The form should then be shared with the Apprenticeship Adviser to read in preparation for the meeting.

At the Progress Review meeting, the adviser will discuss the reflective statement, ask questions about this, and other aspects of the programme. The adviser will encourage you and the apprentice to agree on projects and opportunities for the

---

<sup>1</sup> As per the 2025/2026 Funding Rules, apprenticeship Progress Review meetings for new starters from September 2024 should take place every 3 calendar months. For apprentices who started before or on 31/07/2024, Progress Review meetings will continue to be held every 12 weeks.

achievement of KSB's in the workplace to support development of occupational competency and apply theory to practice.

SMART targets relating to development needs will be agreed at each review.

## **The End Point Assessment (EPA)**

The taught aspect of the apprenticeship, i.e., the degree, is assessed continuously through module assignments or exams and a final piece of work or exam. However, successful achievement of the full apprenticeship is not confirmed until the apprentice has completed the End Point Assessment (EPA).

As the apprentice reaches the end of the apprenticeship, they will have the opportunity to enter the 'gateway'. This is the point at which the achievement of the apprenticeship standards is assessed, thereby confirming occupational competency.

However, an apprentice cannot enter 'gateway' unless the employer agrees that the apprentice is ready to proceed towards the EPA and the apprentice has achieved all the required academic credits/ qualifications in their apprenticeship (including a pass in English and Maths at Level 2, if not already achieved prior to starting the apprenticeship).

There are numerous EPA assessment plans<sup>2</sup>, with different timelines and methods of completion. It is advised that as the mentor you read the assessment plan for your apprentice's standard and support where appropriate.

**Please note** that not all EPA's take the form of an additional assessment, and some will be integrated into the University's examination board processes. Assessment plans can be viewed under the relevant standard on the Skills England website.

## **Off- the- Job Training (OTJT)**

An essential requirement of the apprenticeship is for the apprentice to be given sufficient time to develop the KSB's. The Department for Education (DfE) has regulatory requirements for this. Apprentices must have a minimum of 20% of their contracted hours (capped at 30 hours per week) to be allocated to Off- the- Job training to support their learning and progress, although some apprenticeships require significantly more at UEA; this is detailed within the Training Plan.

### **OTJT**

The mentor of an apprentice should support the apprentice in achieving this requirement and check that they are recording the amount of time they receive and how this is used.

OTJT includes:

---

<sup>2</sup> As per the 2025/2026 Funding Rules, all assessment plans will be reviewed by the DfE and any updates will be published on the Skills England website.

- Course taught time including attendance at taught sessions, workshops, seminars and tutorials, as well as any hybrid or online learning.
- Activities completed in the workplace which support skills development relevant to the apprenticeship.
- Other activities undertaken by the apprentice which are outside of the workplace and working hours can be included as OTJT if the apprentice is given time off in lieu.

Examples of OTJT include:

- Course related online training.
- Course projects and assignments, including related research, study and development.
- Additional training or development based on identified needs.
- IT training.
- Shadowing, mentoring or visiting other departments.
- Attendance at conferences.
- Industry visits.
- Learning support at UEA or at work.
- Additional work related responsibilities.
- Revision.

Please be aware that formal assessments do **not** count towards OTJT hours.

We advise that at the start of the apprenticeship you meet with the apprentice to discuss how and when the Off- the- Job training will be completed, referring to their Training Plan which will give details of what should be included and when it is expected that they should be given time to research, develop and write assignments; this **should not take up the full allocation of OTJT hours**. Further use of the OTJT hours should be signposted for workplace training and development to support identified skills enhancement and possibly learning support. Other time should be available for elements which cannot be pre-planned, such as opportunities that occur as the apprentice progresses through their journey.

**Attendance** - You will see in the broader Employer Handbook for apprenticeships, there is a section on attendance. It is essential that this guidance is followed by the employer and mentor as any non-attendance of course sessions will impact on achievement of the OTJT hours, and this time will need to be made up. You will need to arrange with the apprentice how they will receive the outstanding OTJT hours and what this will include.

## 5. Supporting the Apprentice

### Capacity

As well as supporting apprentices to apply new knowledge, skills and behaviours in the workplace, the apprenticeship mentor has a key role in ensuring the apprentice has the capacity to manage the expectations and demands of the apprenticeship whilst also managing other aspects of their life.



For these reasons, it is important that the informal meetings and catch-up sessions are scheduled so that you can be monitoring how well the apprentice is coping and identifying where support is needed. This support might just be a chance to bend your ear; however, there might be a much more fundamental concern to unpick.

You need to be looking out for signs that they are struggling, i.e., indications that they are working late into the evening, they are missing family time or they are struggling with attendance and submission. If you are familiar with their course module requirements and hand-in dates, this will help. This information can be found in the apprenticeship Course Handbook.

## **Networking**

Apprentices should be encouraged to seek out their own support network and opportunities to inform their learning. In your role as mentor, however, you have the opportunity to introduce apprentices to resources, materials, people and opportunities which will inform and enhance their learning. In the first instance, this might be internal connections, i.e., for shadowing purposes, particularly if the apprentice is new to the organisation. However, as they progress through the apprenticeship, they would certainly benefit from interaction with broader opportunities that you can offer based on your experience and knowledge.

## **Health and Safety**

The employer organisation is responsible for the safety of the apprentice in the workplace. Therefore, when the apprentice starts you should ensure that a health and safety assessment is carried out. This will be to assess the risks in the organisation and the apprentice's workspace as well as assessing the requirements of the apprentice in terms of working equipment and protective equipment.

As the mentor, you should work with the designated health and safety officer to ensure this assessment is completed.

## **Welfare and Safeguarding**

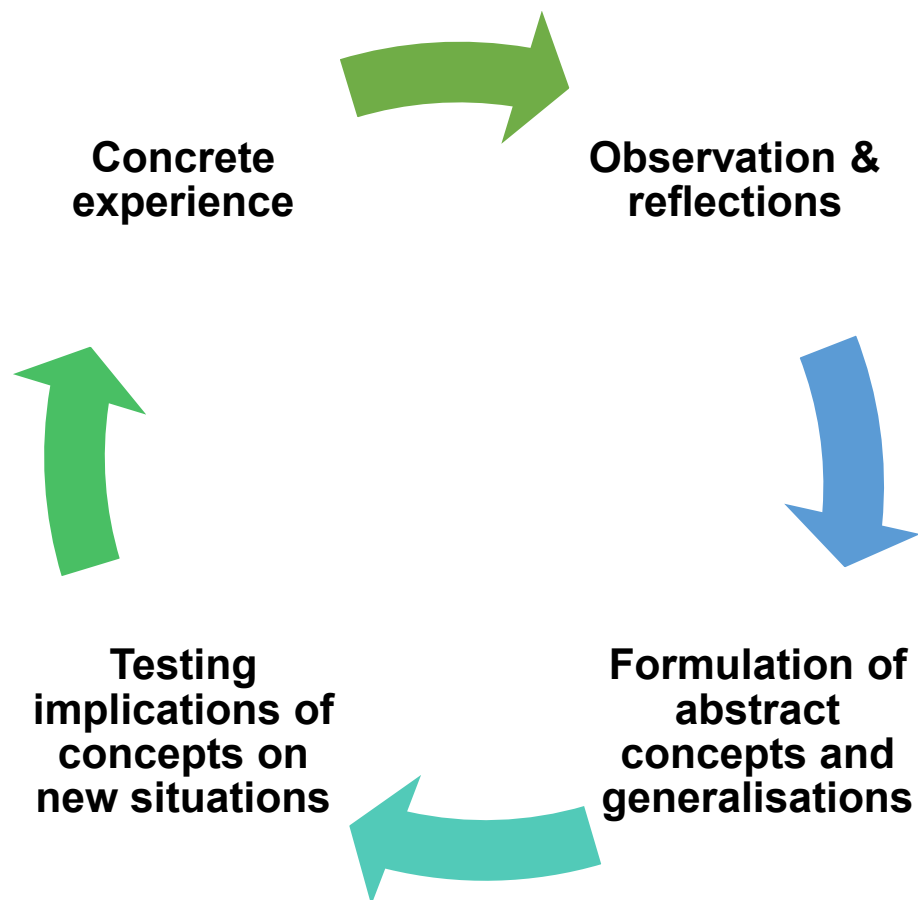
An employer has a duty of care towards all members of staff; however, they have an enhanced duty of care for apprentices to ensure that they are not at risk of harassment, discrimination or abuse. An employer must have appropriate supervision for apprentices in the workplace to support welfare and safeguarding needs. This support will work alongside the support provided by the UEA through its Student Support Services team which will provide apprentices with advice and guidance on safety and safeguarding.

The UEA is very focussed on ensuring that apprentices understand the government's Prevent Duty and what this means to them. Employers of apprentices also have a responsibility to be aware of the Prevent Duty and do what they can to reduce the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism in any form.

## *Appendix 1*

# Models of Reflection

## Kolb's Learning Cycle (1984)

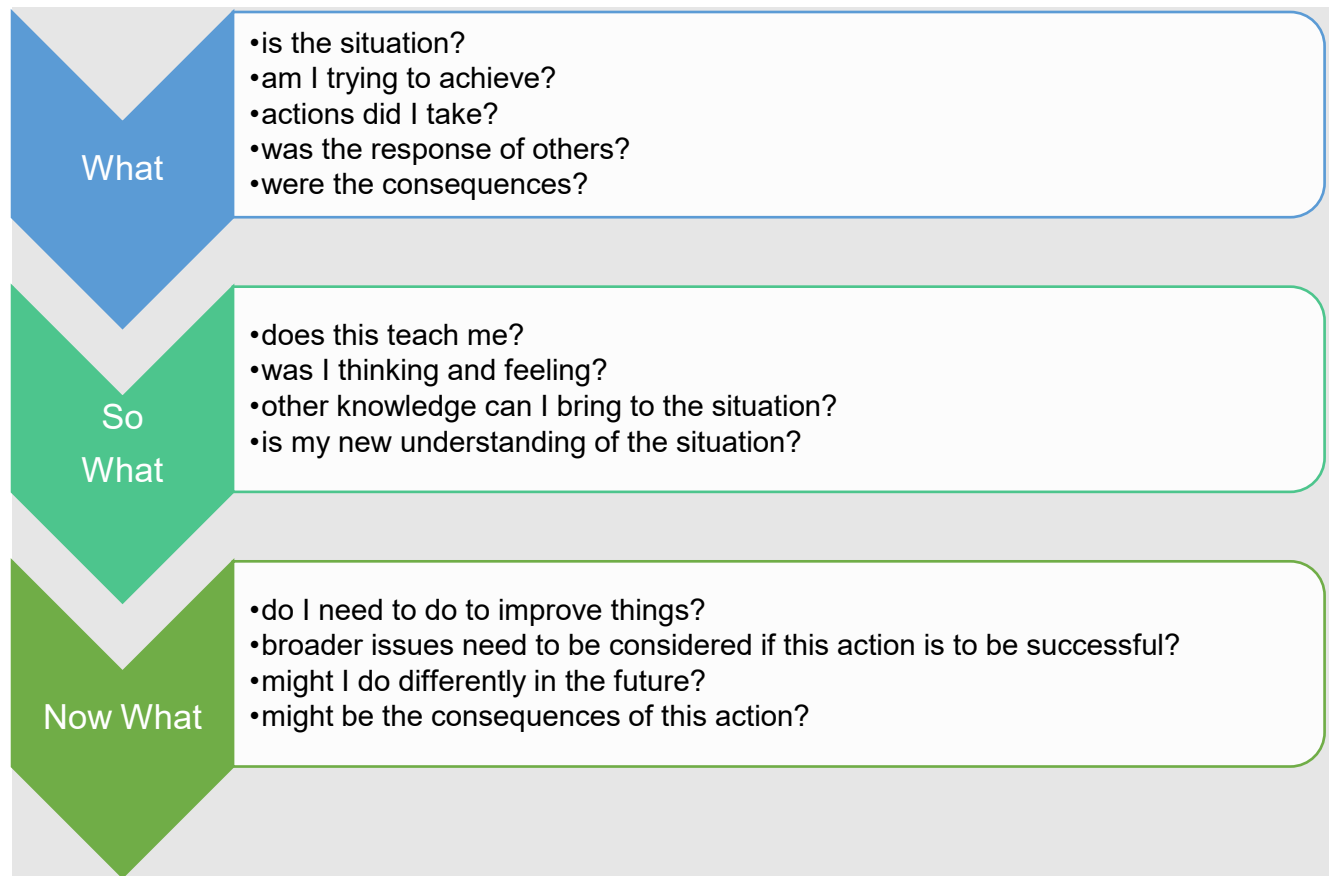


## Atkins and Murphy Reflective Cycle (1994), amended from Gibbs (1988)



# What, So What and Now What!

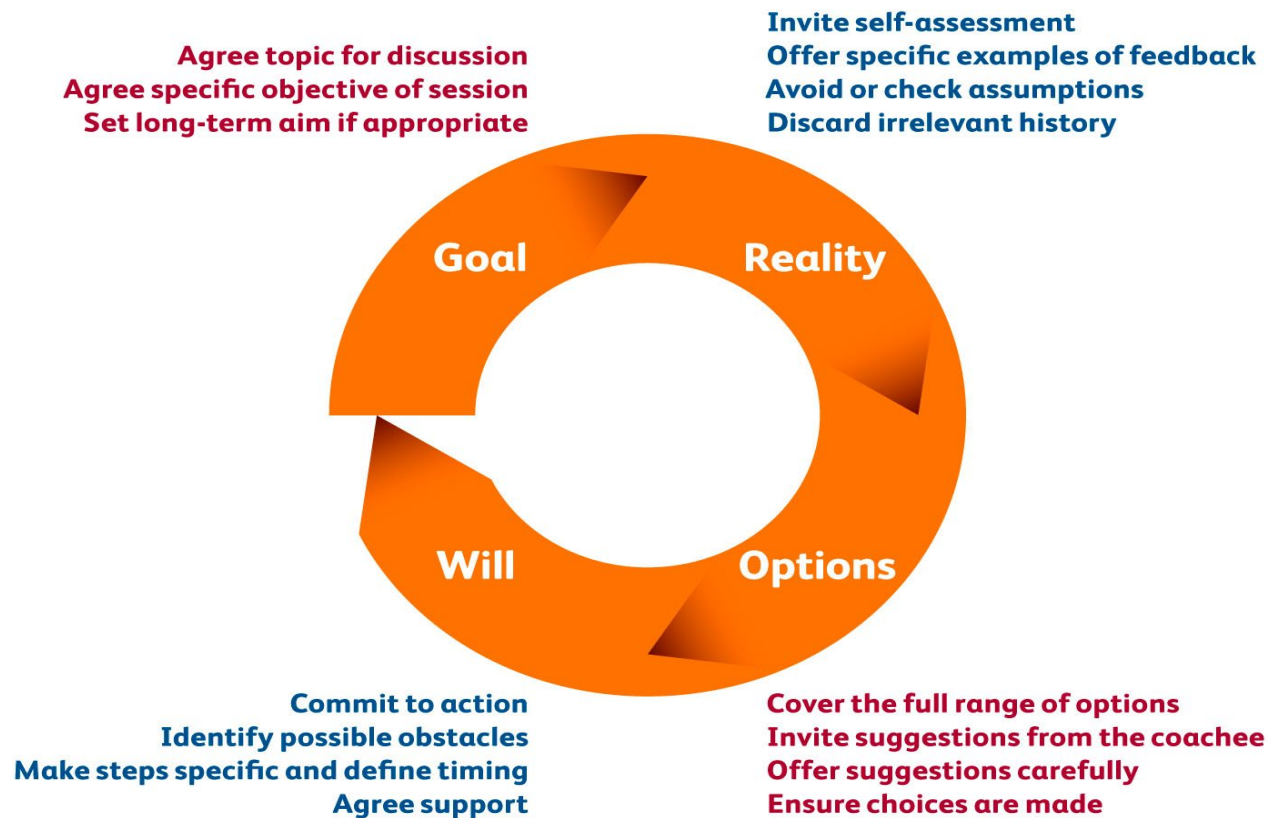
Amended from Rolfe et al (001)



## Appendix 2

# The GROW Model

GOAL	REALITY
What do you want to achieve? What would achieving this led to long term? When would you like to achieve this by?	What is the current position? What have you done so far? What stops you from moving on?
OPTIONS	WILL
What could you do? What else? and what else?	What will you do? What will be the first step? By when?



## Appendix 3

# The Push Pull Model

