Student tips: In a PLAR learner's own words

A PLAR learner contributed these tips to successful portfolio construction, which CLA has labelled thematically. CLA is indebted to the student for taking the time to share some of their strategies.

Motivation:

"My biggest single motivation right now for progressing as quickly as I am on a "return to work" deadline. My goal is to have the statements all drafted by then since I feel this is the most difficult" work. I know once I am back at work (I am on maternity leave) that I will be severely limited in my free time, which right now is about 3.5 to 4 hours a day during the week and 2 hours on the weekend, plus the evenings (about 1.5 hours)."

Timing:

"I know I am most productive in the mornings so I schedule myself against "schoolwork" then as I know I can get a lot done."

PLAR resources:

"I found the PLAR documents page very helpful and have continually referred to the document "Helpful guide to developing your portfolio learning", in particular Appendix A (Bloom's Taxonomy) and the Learning Statement Hints where they discuss addressing the "what", "how", and "why" in the statements."

Work habits and strategies:

1. "I try to dedicate time each day to work on the statements, even if I only do one, or only edit (unless I am tied up with household stuff for a stretch...)"

2. "I have a dedicated work space that I can go to away from the rest of the house hold to concentrate and get stuff done."

3. "When I get stuck - feels like I am having writer's block, I don't push it. I let it rest and come back to it with a fresh mind."

4. "When reading the outcomes I think about the jobs, or if relevant, personal experiences, I have had which allowed me to gain the knowledge the outcome is asking for. When thinking job to job, I find it easier to think about specific experiences and then write a general statement to cover those. I refer back to the outcomes very often to re-check that I am writing to what it is asking for."

5. "I think and "do" in small steps. If I look at all the outcomes of some of the bigger courses I have done, it can be very discouraging to think about how much work it is… so I just take one outcome at a time, sometimes working in a separate document (not the template) with just the one outcome at the top and then copying it into the template afterward."

External resources:

"I use the Internet to look up words and find synonyms so that I am not too repetitive and also to refresh my memory on topics to ensure my terminology is right. I refer to my course ware as well for memory refreshers."

Encouragement:

"The tips, feedback and positive encouragement from you helps me to keep moving forward."

Self-knowledge:

"The rest, I think, is just my personal style of being very organized and having the self-discipline to work on the statements very often if not every day. I also think having skills in writing and having experienced university type work before helps."