

Dandelion Program Transition Plan

Version 1.2



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Terms and definitions

Term/acronym	Definition
ALM	Application Lifecycle Management
AS	Autism Spectrum
COB	Close of business
DHS	Department of Human Services
DRD	Detailed Requirements Document
DXC	DXC Technology
SME	Subject Matter Expert

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Purpose

The Dandelion Transition Plan is intended to guide DXC Technology and clients with Dandelion Team members in transitioning members of the Dandelion Team into the broader client workforce.

Introduction

People on the Autism Spectrum require a level of support when undergoing change. The Dandelion Transition Plan has been developed to guide the process for individual Dandelion Team members, who have been assessed as ready, to transition from the pod in which they commenced to other teams within the client workplace. The plan outlines the process and support required during the transition to ensure suitable support mechanisms are in place to facilitate a successful transition.

Transition Principles

The Dandelion Transition Plan is based around a number of core principles, defined to enable a person from the Dandelion Team to lead a full and independent career, as follows:

1. An objective of the Dandelion Program is to provide employment opportunities for people on the Autism Spectrum, and develop their technical skills and social confidence to succeed in the workplace. This, in turn, builds another available skill base of people to meet the labour demands of the client.
2. This transition plan will provide a framework to identify Dandelion Team members who have developed the combined technical and social skills necessary for them to confidently further their careers outside of the Dandelion Team pod, by:
 - a. Assisting Dandelion Team members to understand and plan their IT career;
 - b. Working with the client to identify opportunities based upon a team member's career goals, skills, and motivation;
 - c. Providing a new support structure to Dandelion Team members who have transitioned into the next stage of their career outside of the pod; and
 - d. Providing autism awareness training to mentors and team members, enabling them to effectively support and work with transitioned Dandelion Team members.
3. As Dandelion Team members transition into the next stage of their career, this potentially creates the opportunity for other people with autism to be engaged in the remaining client Dandelion Team. This plan will also consider:
 - a. The group dynamics with those remaining in the Dandelion Team; and
 - b. The process for recruiting and selecting potential new candidates.
4. Ultimately, the objective is for Dandelion Team members to become confident, self-sufficient, and independent of the Dandelion Support Team, to pursue their future careers in IT.

Transition Implementation Steps Overview

The transition of a person from the Dandelion Pod into another team outside the pod needs to be managed in a prescribed manner to ensure positive progression, maintain the confidence of the individual, and provide effective support for continued success. The key steps are:

1. Identify suitable individuals who wish to be, or have been, assessed as ready to transition outside the pod;
2. Work with the identified team member to define a career path, so that the role into which they are transitioned fits with their career plan and motivations/interests;
3. Establish and define the localised team support, and provide appropriate training for the members of the team into which the Dandelion team member is being transitioned; and
4. Implement appropriate reporting between the Dandelion Autism Spectrum Consultant and the receiving team, to ensure that progress continues to be monitored.

These steps are detailed further in this document and within the associated Transition Plan Pack which is a working document. The Pack will be modified based on individual needs of the team member, experience and professional advice provided during the operation of the transition process.

The Transition Plan Pack should be completed through the transition process and key recommendations made on each stage of transition by the Autism Support Consultant. The Pack is confidential and should be treated as per other personally confidential documents: stored in a secure repository.

Key Considerations for Transition

Transition may be destabilising for Dandelion team members that are moving away from the pod, and also for those remaining in the pod who have formed deep team bonds and a reliance upon connections formed with each other. To ensure that factors that may affect or result from the transition (e.g., anxiety) and stability in the team and individuals are maintained, we need to consider:

1. To reduce the impact on the team, it is recommended that simultaneous transitions be limited to one or two team members to ensure successful transition setup. There may be circumstances where a greater number transition together, however this would require careful consideration.
2. Managing the effect on the team (e.g. anxiety, behavioural changes) as team members move away, and friendships and working relationships change.
3. Increased work overhead on the AS Consultant establishing new relationships outside the pod, additional training, and support mechanisms within the receiving team.
4. Managing the anxiety impact for the person transitioning into a new area, and ensuring they are able to get adequate support from the AS Consultant as needed.
5. If the individual is not happy or is not suited to the new position, after an adjustment period of approximately 3 months, they will have the option of returning to the previously held role in the Dandelion Team pod.
6. Determining if the transition is successful will take time, and the feedback gathered by the DXC AS Consultant from the receiving team and the Dandelion team member will be used to measure progress and progression is moving in the right direction.
7. Contributing to the success of the Dandelion team is the emotional awareness of the experienced support team, and how they interact and support the Dandelion team members; this same level of empathy is required from the receiving team. (e.g., willingness to support a person who is experiencing difficulty learning a new task, willingness to learn about autism, and willingness to take on extra workload during the transition phase)
8. Change is one of the main areas that a person on the spectrum may have difficulty accepting. As a result, each transition may vary given each individual on the spectrum experiences and manages change in different ways; this is in addition to external factors which may also differ.

Stage 1 - Suitable Dandelion Team Member Identification

It is important that team members who are ready to transition away from the pod are assessed as suitable and ready to do so. Current performance, rating scores, and assessment from 1:1 meetings will be used as a guide to ensure that team members are successfully meeting expectations before a transition is considered.

The following points will guide the beginning of a Dandelion Team employee's transition journey to move out of the supported Dandelion Team Pod and into a new team, on a new project, with long line or remote support from the AS Consultant, DXC Managers, and Leads.

This section of the transition plan is to be completed using the Transition Plan Pack Stage 1 table

1.1. Consultation with Dandelion Team Member to plan transition.

Consultation with a Dandelion team member is important to determine their willingness to transition away from the pod when a suitable role becomes available. Alternatively, a career goal may have been identified by a team member that they may wish to aim for as part of their Personal Development Plan.

To enable transition, a suitable position must have been identified within a project or team in an area which is separate from the Dandelion Team Pod. Dandelion Team employees must display the skills and confidence to succeed away from the Pod before they are approached to discuss an opportunity to transition.

Ideally, it would be best if there was a minimum assessment period of 12 months for each individual to work in the supported Dandelion team before they are approached to transition out. If it becomes apparent that an individual is ready and capable to transition out of the support pod before the end of the first 12 months of employment, they should be given the opportunity to do so. The DXC AS Consultant and Dandelion Support team would have to agree that the individual is capable and ready to transition before this can occur.

A formal meeting will be conducted with the Dandelion Team employee, to ensure that they want to move into another project. They will need as much information on the new role as possible to enable them to make the decision, including:

- Tools they will be using;
- What sort of work they will be allocated;
- Who their mentor will be;
- Who they will be working with;
- Where they will be located; and
- Their working hours.

If they do consent to moving, or the next step in the individual's career plan is to transition out of the pod, then a meeting should be arranged for the Dandelion Team employee, the new Team Manager, the DXC Dandelion Team Manager, their mentor, and the AS Consultant, to provide the Dandelion Team member with detailed information about the new team and the work it undertakes, as well as provide the opportunity to meet the new team members and ask any questions. This will enable the Dandelion employee to make an informed decision.

1.2. Technical skills.

The technical skills required for the new team or project will need to be clearly defined by the client. The DXC Support Team will assess the Dandelion team member's skill level, and determine their ability to learn the skills required to perform in the proposed role they will be transitioning into.

The technical capabilities that are reviewed and scored will differ depending upon the area of technical work that the team is working on.

The rating scores in the technical capabilities table of the previous 1:1 meetings will be used to support the assessment of the individual's technical competencies. An assessment of readiness to transition into a new team will be based on analysis of the rating scores, comments gathered in 1:1 meetings, and on the job observations. The individual should have consistently scored in the range of 5 to 10 over the previous 4 months, at minimum, to be considered at a skill level to begin transition.

If the individual has participated in additional training, has acquired technical certification, or is considered to be a 'Subject Matter Expert (SME)', this will also be taken into account when undertaking the assessment.

1.3. Social Skills, Employability Skills, Coping with Change.

The AS Consultant, in conjunction with the Dandelion team employee and their DXC Lead/Manager, will discuss and assess (through past observations) the individuals' ability and readiness to manage in new social situations.

In some cases, support with some social interactions may be necessary. The AS consultant will provide strategies to suit the individual's needs and the situation, if support is required.

A key tenet of the Dandelion program is that we have a better understanding and awareness of autism and adapt ourselves to make the workplace more accommodating to those on the spectrum. Education, and a willingness to do so, is vital to support the transition.

The Dandelion team member may require reassurance that they will still be supported by the AS Consultant. Frequent contact will be made at first, to ensure the transition is going well, with a minimum of weekly feedback gathered from both the Dandelion team employee and their mentor to ensure everything is going smoothly.

Mentors and those working directly with the Dandelion team member will need to undertake further in-depth autism training, to teach the strategies and techniques that will guide them in their new position.

This training will contain more detailed information about autism and the areas which will be affected. It will also be an opportunity to provide the mentor with any relevant information about the individual who they will be working with, e.g. learning style, social skills, and sensory needs.

As is often the case in the workplace, teams are changed, moved, reshaped, or even disbanded based on business and operational needs. Consideration as to the impact this will have on the Dandelion team member will need to be taken into consideration and managed appropriately.

It would be normal to assume that a prerequisite for transition would be that the person is performing full time hours. However, each opportunity must be looked at individually;

Dandelion team members may be better suited to a different type of role that helps them to achieve working full time hours.

Through conversations and the responses to the potential anxiety levels in the weekly checklist, the AS Consultant will monitor the Dandelion team employee's anxiety levels, to ensure that working full-time hours is not too taxing on their wellbeing.

Personal Development Plans

Dandelion team members are assessed monthly on their social integration and technical skills. These assessments are scored, and profiles are maintained to track their progress.

Using these assessments and support team recommendations, a Personal Development Plan is created to support any knowledge gap that they may have. This plan will detail the strategies and technical training required for a person to reach the goals defined for them. Social integration and autism related goals are worked towards using specifically defined strategies and interventions, while technical skills are reached through ongoing technical training, mentoring, and support.

Each person on the Autism Spectrum is different and may take longer to develop the skills they need to move to the next level of their career. Some individuals may be working at their full capacity and may not have the capability or desire to transition into another role. As a result, they may not attain the goals in a Personal Development Plan as a consequence of autism related needs or personal choice. This may mean that a person is not recommended, or does not want to transition into another role. In these instances they will remain, or should have the choice to continue in the Dandelion team performing the role that they were originally employed to perform.

Stage 2 - Career Planning

Some Dandelion team members have existing IT qualifications. It is therefore important to align current skills, knowledge, their interests, and experience when planning career progression.

This section of the transition plan is to be completed using the Transition Plan Pack Stage 2 table

2.1 DXC People Care Manager Discussion

When an individual has been assessed as ready for transition to another role they will meet with their DXC People Care manager to discuss their career options.

The intent of this discussion is to determine the career path through IT that the individual has an interest in, and provide details of the job families and roles within that career path. Existing role statements and associated career pathway documentation will inform these discussions

2.2 DXC Career Planning Tools

DXC has a comprehensive online career planning system. This system identifies the types of career path within IT, the branches within those paths, and the skills and qualifications needed to achieve a person's goals.

The DXC People Care manager will work with the Dandelion team member, using these tools to determine the goals needed to achieve their intended outcome. This will provide the insight to enable alignment with available client workplace opportunities.

This process will better inform the individual about the roles that are available to transition to and whether those roles fit their career plan.

2.3 DXC Goal Setting

Once the career path, skill requirements, and qualification attainments have been determined, these will be loaded by the DXC People Care manager into the Dandelion team member's goal plans which are formally reviewed on a six monthly basis as targets for career progression.

Stage 3 - Mentor Identification and Training

It is not intended that a Dandelion team member enter another team without any level of support or awareness training provided to that team. A suitable and willing mentor within the client team will be identified, assigned, and trained to allow them to provide support and management, whilst being a two way conduit for the flow of information back to the Dandelion team AS Consultant.

The AS Consultant will provide awareness training to staff within the team into which the Dandelion team member is transitioning. Other interfacing teams and stakeholders will also need to be provided with a level of autism awareness training.

This section of the transition plan is to be completed using the Transition Plan Pack Stage 3 table

3.1. Disclosure

It is a legal requirement that a Dandelion employee must give permission to disclose any personal information to the mentor. The consent form must be signed and stored in the Dandelion team employee's hard copy file.

It is not, however, mandatory that a Dandelion team member disclose their diagnosis with all members of the receiving team. This must be kept as a personal preference of the Dandelion team member otherwise this may be a barrier to transition.

To make the transition as successful as possible for a Dandelion team member, they will need to disclose their diagnosis to at least one of the receiving team members. It is important that this is fully understood by the Dandelion team member.

A Dandelion team member should be able to seek and receive counselling in respect of the disclosure of their diagnosis to help them make this decision.

It may be that a choice is made by the individual to disclose only to particular receiving team members or mentors.

The mentor must agree to keep confidential any information shared or identified while working with a Dandelion team member. The sharing of confidential information by a team member about aspects of their autism related needs with a mentor must remain private, and if there are any concerns these need to be discussed immediately with the AS Consultant in the first instance for guidance. The AS Consultant will advise if there are any related risks and will discuss with DXC HR and the client HR/management as required.

3.2. Mentor Selection

Selection of the right type of mentor is the difference between success and failure when working with autistic people. The following characteristics would be desirable in a person who is showing interest to be a mentor:

- Flexibility
- Patience
- Self-learning and reflection
- Willingness to make mistakes and learn from these
- Good people skills
- Empathy

- Compassion
- Pragmatism
- Professionalism and role model
- A strong work ethic

Mentor behaviours and skills:

- Strong communication skills
- Respectful and non-patronising
- Approachable
- Consistency with applying rules and boundaries
- Ability to mentor and coach
- Commitment to learning about autism and the individual they are to mentor
- Adherence to the confidentiality needs of the Dandelion team employee

It is important the person taking on the role of mentor is willing to invest time and energy into guiding the Dandelion employee. This is likely to require a readjustment of the mentor's existing workload during the early phase of the transition. Ideally, the person would volunteer to become a mentor and be devoted to support the successful transition and ongoing support of the Dandelion employee.

If a person is directed to take on the mentoring role, but does not really want to do it or understand the requirement, there is a risk that this will impact negatively on the Dandelion employee and the success of the transition.

People with autism generally take a longer time to build trusting relationships with others. Therefore, whenever possible, the person who takes on the role of a mentor should be a person who is likely to remain in that position for an extended period of time. Consistency and predictability will help the Dandelion employee feel more comfortable in their new work team. Planning for the longevity of the mentor's role when working with a Dandelion employee must be considered.

The AS Consultant will need to build a positive rapport with the mentor and other team members working alongside the Dandelion employee.

Frequent and open communication is the key to successfully developing and maintaining these relationships. The AS Consultant will provide the mentor and the team members with advice and strategies, and be available for debriefing and honest lines of communication. Modes of communication will include a balance of face to face, skype, email, phone calls, and text messages.

The mentor and the team members of the Dandelion employee need to feel supported by the AS Consultant. If information regarding the Dandelion employee's technical ability or training advice is required, the members of the DXC Support Team would be available to liaise with the mentor.

Mentors will be trained to carry out the requirements of performance reporting processes as used by the Dandelion support team.

3.3. Weekly Checklists

The mentor will complete a performance checklist at the end of each week and forward it to the AS Consultant. If the mentor has ticked any of the “unsatisfactory” boxes on the checklist, the AS Consultant will meet with the Dandelion employee and the mentor on the Monday of the following week. Strategies will be discussed, agreed upon, and implemented as soon as possible.

The Dandelion team member will also have a checklist to fill in each week which will be processed the same at the mentors’ checklist. This will help identify problems and potential problems that could affect the success of the process.

The AS Consultant and mentor will revise the frequency of completion of the weekly checklist as the Dandelion employee progresses through the transition, until it is no longer required.

The checklist form is available in Appendix A of this document.

3.4. Monthly 1:1 Template

The technical capabilities table in the 1:1 template will be tailored to reflect the tasks being performed by the Dandelion employee. During the first week of every month, the mentor will be requested by the AS Consultant to fill in the 1:1 template. The AS Consultant will train the mentor about how they are expected to use the 1:1 template.

This information is used to keep a referenceable history of the progression of the Dandelion team member and to taper the requirement for ongoing support as they successfully progress through the transition to no longer requiring regular autism related support.

3.5. Client Mentor and Team Autism Awareness Training

To ensure that the right understanding and behaviours are established in the receiving team, a training session will be delivered to the new team and other staff interfacing with the team, covering:

- An overview of autism
- An overview of the Dandelion Program
- Coping with change
- Building trust and relationships

Stage 4 - Long Line Support

Once a Dandelion team member has transitioned into a new team, long line support, which aligns closely to the support they have been receiving whilst in the Dandelion team, will be implemented. This is to ensure that the Dandelion employee is managing their autism needs, and also that the mentor and new team are happy with performance and managing to deal with any autism related needs

This section of the transition plan is to be completed using the Transition Plan Pack Stage 4 table

4.1. Transition Model

Each Dandelion team member has individual needs. Consideration must be made by the individual, AS Consultant, and client mentor about the transition model. Is it suitable for that person to transition all at once, or would it be better using a graduated approach? This should be agreed prior to starting the transition, and if a graduated model is used then this should be reviewed at agreed intervals.

4.2. Personal Checks

The DXC Autism Support Consultant visits the individual daily to check in with them and their mentor. This can become less frequent over time.

For the first few weeks of the transition period, the AS Consultant would visit the Dandelion employee in their new team once a day (or as designated in the transition model) if possible, therefore physical proximity must be considered. Conversations between the AS Consultant, the Dandelion employee, and the mentor would help to assess the need to continue daily face to face visits. The frequency of face to face visits will be dependent on the Dandelion employee's comfort level, gauged through conversation, and by checking reported comfort levels on the weekly checklist, with the expectation that this would reduce to an 'as needed' basis. The outcome of these discussions should be considered part of the private information about the individual, and treated as such by all involved.

It is recommended that the AS Consultant has, at minimum, one face to face visit with the Dandelion employee and their mentor per week.

4.3. Remote Support

Remote support will be provided by the AS Consultant on a daily basis using a variety of communication options.

The same tools we all use to communicate in the workplace would be used to support the Dandelion employee and their mentor on a daily basis. These tools include Skype for Business instant messaging, emails, texting, and phone calls. The AS Consultant will continue to record notes in the Dandelion employee's file as required.

4.4. Dandelion Team Stand Up

When possible, the Dandelion Employee would attend the combined DXC Dandelion team stand up every Friday morning, to remain connected with their DXC/Dandelion colleagues.

To ensure that the transitioned Dandelion employee remains connected to their original Dandelion team members and Support Team, it would be beneficial for them to attend the combined weekly stand up. DXC news and housekeeping is also discussed during the combined weekly stand up. It is important that the Dandelion team feel connected with DXC as they are DXC employees. This also provides encouragement for others that there are opportunities available as their performance levels increase.

4.5. Weekly Checklist Completion

Weekly Checklists will be filled out by the Dandelion Employee and their mentor.

Weekly checklists will be filled out by the Dandelion employee and their mentor and forwarded to the AS Consultant by COB every Friday.

If the checklist shows that the Dandelion employee has experienced difficulties during the week, the AS Consultant will arrange a meeting to occur on the Monday of the following week to discuss any issues or difficulties. The same applies if the mentor has ticked any of the “unsatisfactory” boxes on the checklist.

At this meeting, strategies will be discussed, agreed upon, and implemented as soon as is possible to avoid any ongoing issues or difficulties; prompt and timely intervention is critical. The checklists will be stored in the Dandelion employee’s hard copy file.

4.6. Monthly 1:1 Meetings

The AS Consultant will book monthly 1:1’s and will send the 1:1 Template to the mentor who will fill out the Technical Capabilities section as per the training previously provided by the AS Consultant. The mentor will score the Dandelion employee against the capabilities and comment on their performance. The mentor will then email the template back to the AS Consultant who will complete the rest of the template and print two copies: one for the Dandelion employee to keep, and one to store in their hard copy file.

4.7. Team Changes and Dissolutions

During the normal course of business operations, teams change in terms of members, functions, and workloads and, in some instances, dissolved. Some of these types of changes may come as a challenge to a person with autism, generating anxiety and related behaviours, and their needs must be considered. When a major team change is planned, the team manager and/or mentor must discuss this with the AS Consultant so that they have the ability to implement suitable strategies to manage any anxiety related needs.

4.8. AS Consultant Scaling

DXC need to assess how far and wide a single AS consultant can scale as more Dandelion team members transition out of the pod and new people enter the pod. In addition, as further support is provided to new mentors and teams, the ability of the AS Consultant to maintain the right level of engagement is diminished and additional capacity will be required. This will become particularly acute if the transition is not managed correctly. Ideally, the goal is for reduced support requirements for those transitioned out of the team.

Stage 5 - Reporting

5.1. Progress Reporting

The mentor will need to contribute to reporting progress of the individual, as they are the person working directly with the Dandelion Employee.

As mentioned in the Mentor Training and the Long Line of Support sections of this document, the mentor will have a responsibility to contribute to the reporting on the progress and wellbeing of the Dandelion employee. The mentor will be required to fill in a weekly checklist, the monthly 1:1 Template, meet with the AS Consultant when required, and communicate daily with the AS Consultant either face to face or via Skype, email, or phone if issues arise.

The AS Consultant will be responsible for engaging the mentor and the Dandelion employee to attend meetings, and to complete documents required to record progress and support needs.

The AS Consultant will coordinate and be responsible for triggering and gathering documentation relating to the Dandelion employee's performance and support needs.

5.2. Reporting Data Collation

Rating scores from monthly 1:1's will be collated and provided to the DXC Applications Services Manager.

The AS Consultant will provide the DXC Applications Services Manager with the rating scores from the monthly 1:1's for each Dandelion employee. The data provided to the DXC Applications Services Manager is de-identified to protect the Dandelion employee's privacy.

5.3. Progress and Success Reporting and Fall-back

Through the reporting and feedback, the AS Consultant will work with the transitioned team member, their DXC People Care manager, and the manager of the receiving team to determine whether appropriate progress is being made within their new role. This will be determined by looking at:

1. Job satisfaction levels
2. Performance
3. Access to suitable training and mentoring
4. Technical progress
5. Social and behavioural progress
6. Anxiety levels
7. Acceptance level of the person into the receiving team

The intent of this reporting is to ensure that the role is the correct fit for the Dandelion team member and also the customer. If the fit is not deemed suitable, the Dandelion team member can return to a role in the Dandelion Pod.

Transition Backfill

As Dandelion team members transition into other roles, the strength of the team needs to be maintained by identifying suitable new Dandelion team members from the autism spectrum. A pipeline of available and suitably identified people needs to be built and maintained to feed demand.

The candidate pipeline will be built using one of two methods:

1. Execution of a standard Specialisterne workshop and assessment program to identify a group of people that are suitable to take up roles immediately, or alternatively remain on a register of suitable people until an opportunity becomes available.
2. Implementation of a university student work experience program that draws students on the autism spectrum from studies in the STEM subjects.

Work experience would be gained within DXC and the equivalent content of the assessment program built into the work experience program to ensure that the students are suitable to become Dandelion team members when their studies and examinations have been completed.

The people who successfully complete the work experience program and their studies would either move into identified opportunities or remain on a register of suitable people to join a Dandelion team.

A backfill strategy ensures new opportunities are being made available to those on the spectrum and we are growing the available resource base in the workforce continuing the positive impact of the Dandelion Program.

Appendix A – Support Templates

Mentor Weekly Feedback Checklist			
Date:			
Mentor's Name:			
Mentee's Name:			
Please enter a score from the scale in the Satisfactory or Not Satisfactory box to reflect the past week for each of the following areas:			
Scale 1=excellent, 4 = requires attention			
	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	Comments
Punctuality			
Productivity			
Quality of work			
Time management			
Accountability			
Effective communication			
Social interactions with colleagues			
Appearance / Personal hygiene			

Dandelion Employee Feedback Checklist

Date:

Employees Name:

Mentor's Name:

Please draw a circle on the 1 to 10 rating scale against each area to score, on average, how you felt over the past week at work. 1 being the lowest and 10 being highest.

Comfort level (sense of wellbeing)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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Anxiety levels	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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Ability to stay on task	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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Ability to manage workload / time manage	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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Overall sense of job satisfaction	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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Please tick either the Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory box to reflect the past week for each of the following areas:

	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory
--	---------------------	-------------------------

Support provided by Mentor		
-----------------------------------	--	--

Provision of tasks		
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Comments:		
------------------	--	--