Personal strengths & weaknesses

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Understanding your own personal strengths and weaknesses

We all have our strengths and we all have our weaknesses. Many people will be familiar with an interviewer asking about an interviewee's weaknesses. However, when most of us are asked about our strengths and weaknesses, we do not really know how to answer.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT analysis) is a management tool used worldwide by managers to help them to analyse a situation as part of strategy development. You may have heard of it in relation to thinking about yourself when you are considering applying for a new job or changing career direction. It has many uses. It can be used to analyse the features a team.
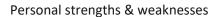
SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) is a very good way of analysing your own personal strengths and weakness, particularly in the context of operating in a team. When studying in an online context, you are not studying alone or remotely, you are studying as part of a wider cohort of students and you will be socially constructing knowledge and understanding. This is also true of your professional practice as a member of a teaching team. Your team will all be working for the benefit of your students.

- Think of strengths as something internal to you; a skill or experience that you can being to the team.

- Weaknesses can also be internal. Not everyone is a good mathematician, chemist or linguist, for example:

    o How good do you feel your technical skills are?

    o Have you engaged in any other kinds of online discussions?

    o How is your time management?

    o Do you have regular access to this group and how much time do you have to pace your contributions and learn from the discussions?

These are some things you might think about in relation to what you bring (and can therefore support others) and challenges you might face (which others can support you with).

What you get out of the learning should be worthwhile in relation to supporting and easing your studies and developing your learning and academic writing. What other things might get in the way of realizing these opportunities?

- Opportunities can be things that you look for and identify such as a short course on statistics that might just boost your existing skill level enough to complete the team's task.

- Threats are things that you may not have control over. This might be budgetary restrictions, for example. Sometimes, there are steps that you can take to mitigate these threats such as seeking other sources of funding.

Elements of SWOT

Strengths - (relate to 'you' in a team)	e.g. experience of Internet discussion areas.
Weaknesses - (also relate to you)	e.g. this is the first time you have used the virtual learning environment (VLE); unsure how to participate.
Opportunities - (relates to what online discussions can offer)	e.g. huge opportunity to learn from the perspectives of others potential to make your learning more effective.
Threats - (relates to what can compete for online use)	e.g. the need to read books as well online-based learning material or access to online spaces.

Task

Think about your own situation at the beginning of your academic journey. What are your strengths, and weaknesses? These might be something to do with experience of studying online. Think next about potential opportunities ahead such as enhanced promotion opportunities upon successful completion of the programme. Consider some threats to this. Perhaps finding time to study might be a threat to your progress. How might you mitigate this?