Designing Programs and Development Pathways

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Scope of use

Indicative guidance and working templates to adapt to the organization's context.

Verification scope

Consistency of the published material, its links, edition information and limits of use. Consult the relevant specialist within the organization before adopting a procedure or professional decision.

The following pages retain the original English guide material and formatting. Review dates within that material refer to its original edition. Current edition controls appear here and on the guide webpage.

Current edition and contact

https://uhrda.net/en/organizations/guides/learning-design/

Comments and update requests: info@uhrda.net

Arab Union for Human Resources Development

Designing Programs and Development Pathways

Practical guide | October 2026

1. Starting point and outputs

A practical guide to turning an organizational need into a learning program that produces observable, verifiable performance. It helps training teams define what learners should master, build content, exercises, and assessment around that outcome, and connect learning to workplace application. It covers short programs and progressive pathways, including admission, exemption, completion, and content update rules. Here, a pathway means a sequence of organizational learning; it does not, by itself, constitute an academic qualification or professional license.

Who benefits

- Training and development directors and government academies
- Program designers, experts, and internal trainers
- Department directors supervising the development of new employees and leaders

What you will produce

- A design document linking the performance gap to learning outcomes and evidence of proficiency
- A pathway map covering prerequisites, modules, and assessment points
- A delivery-ready package with cases, exercises, a trainer guide, and a scoring tool
- A pilot plan, application support, and version updates

Inputs to prepare

- A needs report identifying the group, task, gap, and its causes; a training wish list is insufficient
- Work samples with sensitive data removed, role descriptions, and relevant approved procedures
- Data on participants' current level and their language, time, availability, and technology constraints
- The program sponsor, subject matter expert, learning designer, workplace supervisor, and available resources

2. Working methodology

Start with evidence of proficiency

The Union proposes designing backward from the end: identify the task employees will perform after learning, then the evidence needed for acceptance, then the activities that prepare them for it. An outcome such as preparing a decision memo is better than familiarity with decision-making because it defines a product that can be reviewed. The templates, thresholds, and schedule below are proposed design tools to adapt to the organization, rather than an accreditation standard or a claim of conformity with a specification.

Separate the stages of development

Distinguish learning a common foundation, job-specific specialization, supervised application, and independent practice. Use a pre-assessment to avoid repeating what an employee has already mastered; document any exemption with equivalent evidence rather than seniority alone. Hours are not sufficient evidence of competence, and certificates should be accurately named: attendance, completion, or passing, according to what was actually achieved.

Balance learning quality with delivery feasibility

The principles of setting objectives, interaction, assessment, and follow-up draw general guidance from the official sources at the end of the guide. The module sequence and work templates in this guide are practical proposals. The team should test whether training can be delivered under actual working conditions and should not assume that every employee has a constant connection or full-time availability.

> This is an adaptable practical approach developed by the Union with reference to the sources below. Adjust steps, timeframes and measures to the organization and its data. It is not a certificate of compliance or accreditation by the referenced organizations.

3. Implementation steps

1 Confirm the performance problem and program scope

Bring together the owner of the need and learner representatives, and write down the affected task and the gap between current and required performance. Review a sample of errors and identify which arise from skills and which from procedures, authority, or tools. Draft an assignment specifying what the program will address and what requires a parallel management decision. If there is no evidence of a skills gap, diagnose the need again before developing content.

Suggested owner
Training director and process owner

Required output
An approved design assignment and clear boundaries

Progression check
Every learning need has performance evidence and a target task

2 Profile learners and define entry requirements

Create a group profile covering roles, experience, language, technology skills, and available time. Use a short diagnostic task, identify essential prior knowledge, and provide a bridging route for those who need it. Agree to group learners by performance level rather than job title alone, and identify required accommodations and how materials can be accessed when connectivity is poor. Record entry conditions before nominations so they are transparent and fair.

Suggested owner
Learning designer and human resources

Required output
A learner profile, admission rules, and pre-assessment

Progression check
Admission conditions are task-related and verifiable

3 Write learning outcomes and success criteria

For each module, write an observable action, its subject, performance conditions, and acceptance criterion. A suggested example: the employee classifies ten service cases using the approved guide and justifies exceptional cases. Define critical errors that prevent a pass even when the total score is high. Present outcomes to the work manager to ensure that training success reflects a task actually needed.

Suggested owner
Subject matter expert and learning designer

Required output
An outcomes and acceptance criteria matrix

Progression check
A direct assessment can be designed for each outcome

4 Map the pathway and sequence modules

Sequence modules according to knowledge dependencies: foundations, simple cases, exceptions, then an applied project. Define each module's prerequisites, delivery method, estimated learning time, and exit point. Where appropriate, use short readings for introductory knowledge and reserve sessions for practice and discussion. Clarify where learners need a trainer, where they can learn independently, and where supervision is required during real application.

Suggested owner
Pathway designer and program manager

Required output
A pathway map and estimated delivery schedule

Progression check
No module requires a skill that has not already been acquired or demonstrated

5 Build activities and the learning package

Design an exercise for every outcome before preparing slides. Include a de-identified real-world case, learner instructions, suggested time, an explained solution, and a scoring guide for the trainer. Add borderline cases, common errors, and a situation requiring professional judgment. Review the language and accuracy of examples and the rights to use them, and make files readable and printable. If AI assists with a draft, the expert must verify every fact, example, and source.

Suggested owner
Subject matter expert and materials developer

Required output
A learner package and trainer delivery guide

Progression check
Every activity serves an outcome, and every material has a version and a responsible reviewer

6 Design assessment and calibrate scoring

Combine checks during learning with a final task requiring a new application. Use a rubric describing specific levels of quality rather than general labels such as excellent. Have two assessors trial scoring on the same samples and discuss differences before use. Publish rules for retries, feedback, and appeals. Retain test versions and forms, and separate attendance assessment from proficiency assessment.

Suggested owner
Assessment officer and subject matter expert

Required output
Assessment tools, a rubric, and review procedures

Progression check
Criteria are understood and applied consistently by assessors

7 Run a limited pilot and improve

Deliver a pilot version to a group representing the target levels, observing activity duration, recurring questions, and difficulties using materials. Collect work products, assessment results, and trainer and learner feedback. Classify observations as content errors, task difficulty, presentation problems, or timing issues. Address the cause and retest the affected part. High satisfaction alone does not resolve a defect that prevents task performance.

Suggested owner
Program manager and quality team

Required output
A pilot and adjustment log, and a readiness decision

Progression check
Defects affecting content and assessment validity have been resolved

8 Transfer learning and manage the program life cycle

Before the program ends, the learner and supervisor agree on a work task, review date, and verification evidence. Provide a short template and help when difficulties arise. Assign an owner to monitor procedure changes and decide when to update materials or withdraw an old version. Review results by group and module, then decide whether to retain, adjust, or redesign. Follow-up review should reflect the available opportunity to apply learning, rather than one fixed deadline imposed on every program.

Suggested owner
Line supervisor and program owner

Required output
An application plan, version register, and periodic review

Progression check
There is a real application opportunity and evidence of performance after learning

Guide and editable templates: https://uhrda.net/en/organizations/guides/learning-design/

4. Working templates

Review the illustrative row, then complete a copy of the blank row using your organization's information. Download each template as CSV or print it within the guide.

Outcomes and activities alignment template

Complete before writing content; the first row is a hypothetical example and the second is provided for use. Add a separate criterion for critical errors where applicable.

Task	Learning outcome	Activity	Evidence of proficiency	Acceptance criterion
Triage service requests	Classify cases and justify exceptions	Simulate ten cases	A classification and reasoning form	Suggested threshold: 8 of 10 and no critical error

Download CSV template

Module and application pathway brief

Link the module to the learner's work; the supervisor keeps a copy of the agreed task, and the timeframe is reviewed against workload.

Module	Entry requirement	Learning method	Work task	Verification owner
Analyze causes of delay	Read a transaction register	Case workshop and peer review	Analyze a sample of actual transactions	Service manager using the rubric

Download CSV template

5. Hypothetical example: developing staff for an organizational service

A hypothetical organization wanted to prepare 24 employees to triage requests. Diagnosis showed differences in understanding exceptions, while part of the delay arose from missing approval authority that training could not address.

- The organization separated the authority decision from the program and designed three modules and a common simulation task.
- The exceptions module was piloted with six employees, after which two ambiguous cases were rewritten.
- Everyone completed a practical assessment; 18 passed initially and two more passed after support and reassessment, making the workplace application group 20 employees.

Interpreting the result

In the hypothetical educational figures, the first-attempt pass rate was 75%: 18 of 24. After reassessment, the supervisor followed up with the qualified group of 20 employees; application was verified for 15, or 75%. The remaining four had not yet passed and therefore did not enter workplace follow-up. These figures do not represent actual Union results.

Learning from the case

It is useful to distinguish proficiency from attendance, and training weaknesses from a lack of application opportunities or authority.

6. Measures and follow-up

Agree each definition, data source, baseline, target and accountable owner before measurement. Targets require organizational approval. A zero denominator makes a ratio not calculable rather than zero.

Measure	Calculation	Source	Review frequency
Assessment coverage of learning outcomes	Number of learning outcomes with direct assessment evidence ÷ total approved outcomes × 100; if no outcomes have been approved, the indicator cannot be calculated	Design matrix and assessment tool review	Before approving each version
First-attempt pass rate	Number meeting the proficiency standard on the first attempt ÷ number taking the first assessment × 100; report absentees separately	Assessment register and test version	For each cohort
Verified application	Number of assessed individuals demonstrating acceptable workplace performance ÷ number assessed after an opportunity to apply learning × 100; show follow-up coverage alongside it	Work samples and supervisor checklist	After an application opportunity defined by the program
Pathway completion	Number completing pathway requirements ÷ number starting in the same cohort × 100; this alone does not demonstrate proficiency	Enrollment register and completion requirements	At cohort closure

7. Indicative implementation plan

The periods below are adaptable planning stages, not guaranteed delivery times.

Period	Action	Deliverable
Phase one: a suggested two weeks	Profile the group, confirm outcomes, and build the design matrix	An approved design document and pathway map
Phase two: a suggested three weeks	Develop the learning package and assessment tools, and run the initial pilot	A delivery-ready version with an improvement log
Phase three: according to application opportunities	Deliver the cohort, follow up on workplace tasks, and review results	A proficiency and application report and an update decision; durations are estimates rather than a standard

8. Common pitfalls

Starting design with attractive titles

Link every title to a task, a gap, and evidence of proficiency before approval.

One package for all levels

Use pre-assessment, foundation modules, or documented exemptions.

Relying on recall questions

Add a work product or simulation matching the required task.

A certificate implying accreditation that does not exist

Accurately describe attendance or passing and the limits of the program.

Support ending when classroom sessions end

Define a supervisor, application task, support method, and review date.

9. Review checklist

- ☐ The design is linked to a documented performance need.
- ☐ Admission, assessment, and exemption rules have been published.
- ☐ Exercises and scoring tools have been piloted.
- ☐ Each outcome matches an activity and assessment evidence.
- ☐ Application has been agreed with the supervisor.
- ☐ The content owner, review date, and sources are identified.

Use this checklist at the final review. Record observations, the decision owner, approval date and document version.

10. Further reading

Original practical material prepared for the Arab Union for Human Resources Development. Sources support the concepts and further reading; the illustrative models and cases belong to this guide. Reviewed: 16 October 2026.

1. CDC — Quality Training Standards

   A general reference for objectives, interaction, content accuracy, assessment, and follow-up; its use does not mean the program is accredited by CDC.

2. CDC — Assess Training Needs: Conducting Needs Analysis

   A reference for examining the training audience and its circumstances before choosing a learning method.

3. CDC — Evaluate Training: Building an Evaluation Plan

   A reference for defining the purpose and questions of evaluation and data collection methods early in design.