

KEY POINTS AND EXAMPLE OF A SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis is a general technique that can be applied to any number of situations and activities. It is particularly appropriate during strategic planning. Performing a SWOT analysis involves brainstorming and recording strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats concerning a task, individual, or organization. The analysis takes into account internal resources and capabilities (strengths and weaknesses) and ones that are external (opportunities and threats).

Why use the tool?

SWOT analysis is a very effective way of identifying your strengths and weaknesses, and examining the opportunities and threats you face. Carrying out an analysis using the SWOT framework will help you to focus your activities on areas where you are strong and where the greatest opportunities lie.

How to use the tool

To carry out a SWOT analysis, write down answers to the following questions (or similar ones):

Strengths

- What are your advantages?
- What do you do well?
- What do other people see as your strengths?

Consider this from your own point of view and from the point of view of the people you deal with. Don't be modest – be realistic. If you are having any difficulty with this, try writing down a list of your characteristics. Some of these will be strengths!

Weaknesses

- What could you improve?
- What do you do badly?
- What should you avoid?

Again, consider this from an internal and external basis. Do other people perceive weaknesses that you do not see? It is best to be realistic now and face any unpleasant truths.

Opportunities

- Where are the good opportunities facing you?
- What are the interesting trends you are aware of?

Useful opportunities can come from things such as changes in government policy, changes in social patterns and population profiles, and local events.

Threats

- What obstacles do you face?
- What is your competition doing?

Carrying out this analysis will often be illuminating – both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done and in putting problems into perspective. You can also apply SWOT analysis to your competitors – this may produce some interesting insights!

Example

A new student may carry out the following SWOT analysis.

Strengths • I have good IT skills which will facilitate my learning. • I have strong written and spoken communication skills. • My numeracy skills are good which helps me in modules involving calculations.	Weaknesses • I am a slow reader. It will require me significant amount of time to read. • I am not confident working in groups. I feel groups slow me down. • I have a short attention span and is easily distracted.
Opportunities • I will be able to take part in various activities organized by the university. • I can meet new friends and develop my networks. • I will be able to progress my studies further.	Threats • Any negative changes in regulations related to funding would make attending the course non-feasible. • Severe illness would prevent me from submitting course work.