

## **PDP at Aberystwyth University**

### **Striving to help undergraduate students appreciate and develop their graduate attributes**

**3 PDP Portfolios** are being developed using the wiki in Campus Pack which is an “add on” to the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment. In the 2010-11 session PDP Portfolios will be offered to all first and second year undergraduates across the university and final year students in the 2 pilot departments.

**Consultation** – all of the content we have developed is based on extensive staff and student consultation and good practice approaches which have been brought together through membership of the [Centre for Recording Achievement](#)

#### **Portfolio structure**

At the moment, the basic structure of the PDP Portfolio is the same for each year. The difference is in the focus and themes. See section 2 for more information about the themes.

#### **Focus:**

- First year - transition into university and a focus on student support available
- Second year - work/life balance and a focus on work experience opportunities and personality
- Final year - moving beyond graduation and includes a finalists’ countdown, extensive information showing how to access available job vacancies and focus on the graduate skills and attributes gained through final year major project/dissertation.

#### **All PDP Portfolios have 5 sections.**

- **Welcome**
- **Semester 1**
- **Semester 2**
- **Action planning**
- **My department**

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**1 Welcome** – This section includes intro text, how to get started, benefits, employer quotes from recent research we have been doing in partnership with the CRA and forms to guide learning gained through work experience and a place to upload CV's.

**2 Semester 1** – introduces students to supportive resources and includes space to write their reflections which will be reviewed in Semester 2 in the development of their action plan(s). See below 2 screen shots of **First year PDP Portfolio** Semester 1 Transitions page. Look to the right of the first screen shot for an illustration of the **themes** running through this PDP Portfolio in Semester 1.

The screenshot shows a wiki page titled "1 Transition". At the top right, there are links for "Edit | History | Delete". Below the title, it says "Edited by JULIE ANN KEENAN on 8/17/2010 at 11:03 AM, GMT." and "Tags: None (Edit)". The main content area contains a paragraph: "In the early days of university life, with so much to take in, it is important to give yourself time to settle in and see what is required, especially as it can be difficult to retain some of the information you receive during your hectic induction into the university. Use this section of your PDP Portfolio to find support and some of the key resources available to help you." Below this is a section header "Student Support Services" followed by a paragraph: "Student Support Services are a friendly and approachable team. Talk to them early on if you experience problems that you find difficult to resolve. Advisers can help more successfully if your problems are tackled before they become emergencies. They offer advice on [money management](#) to support you through all sorts of funding and budgeting issues. The [Student Health Centre](#) offers support and advice for stress, anxiety and mental health issues. Advice on sexual health, contraception, diet, smoking cessation and maintaining a healthy lifestyle is also available as well as information about other agencies that you can use within our local community." Another paragraph follows: "You can get help with [child care](#), and for students with [disabilities](#) access to notetaking services, adapted accommodation, and [Green Card areas](#) which are equipped with computers, special hardware, additional software and laptop access can be arranged. You can be advised on enabling technology and [special examination arrangements](#) so that you can reach your full potential and get the good results you deserve." The final paragraph in this section is: "The International Student Adviser gives advice and support to [International students](#) on a wide range of issues, as well as providing specialised advice and help with applying for Tier 4 student visas." To the right of the main content is a sidebar with a search box, a "Pages" list including "Welcome", "Semester 1" (with sub-items "1 Transition", "1 Study Skills", "1 Interests", "1 Aspirations", "1 Graduate Skills", "1 Academic Choices"), "Semester 2", "My action plans", and "My department", a "Tags" section with "No tags", and a "Page Contributors" section.

The screenshot shows a wiki page with a paragraph: "Information Services provide library, computing and media services and they have specific resources aimed at new [students](#) to make life easy for you. Familiarise yourself with the services they provide, so you can make the best possible use of them during your studies. The [Life Skills](#) collection, housed in the Hugh Owen Library, has been designed to help with student life and includes books about how to deal with leaving home, cookery, passing a driving test and general household tips." Below this is a section header "The Careers Service" followed by a paragraph: "Making use of the wide range of support offered by the [Careers Service](#) will help you to get maximum value out of your time at Aberystwyth and to make the transition from university to employment, further study or a gap year all the easier when you graduate. If you are planning to work while you study this year, make sure you know how to find part-time, term time [employment opportunities](#) and how to write a good [CV](#)." Below the text are two input boxes. The first is titled "My notes on my transition into university" and contains the instruction: "Insert text here by clicking 'Edit' in the light grey box above. When done, click 'Save & Exit' in the darker grey box below." The second is titled "Questions I will ask my tutor" and contains the instruction: "Insert text here by clicking 'Edit' in the light grey box above. When done, click 'Save & Exit' in the darker grey box below." To the right of the main content is a sidebar with a search box, a "Pages" list, a "Tags" section with "No tags", and a "Page Contributors" section.

**3 Semester 2** – Each theme guides students to reflect on their experiences. This includes the challenges posed by their transition into university, study skills development, exploration of their interests and aspirations, the development of their graduate level skills and attributes and how successful they have been with their academic work. Students are encouraged to review their reflections and invited to create an action plan for development which can be either academic, career or personal.

Each theme includes a small selection of related interview questions for practice and encourages students to recognise the value of their first year experiences and the skills and attributes they have developed as a result. See screen shot below for an illustration of how this is done in relation to the Semester 2 Transitions section.

The screenshot displays the AberLearn Blackboard interface. At the top, the Aberystwyth University logo and 'AberLearn Blackboard' branding are visible. The user's name 'JULIE ANN KEENAN' and navigation links like 'My Places', 'Home', and 'Help' are in the top right. Below the header, there are tabs for 'My Institution' and 'Courses'. The main content area is titled 'PREPARE YOURSELF!' and contains text from Careers Advisers recommending reflective questions. It lists three sample interview questions: 'Tell us about an important decision you have had to make...', 'Reflect on a situation in which you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control...', and 'Tell me about a problem you have had to deal with?'. Below the questions is a text box for the user's 'My practice answer' with instructions to click 'Edit' and 'Save & Exit'. On the right side, a 'Latest Activity' sidebar shows recent updates by Julie Ann Keenan, including '2 Graduate Skills' and a 'First year PDP Portfolio'.

**4 My action plans.** Students can choose to produce either an academic, career or personal plan or more than one, in any combination. This need not be a skill development plan but student development plans are supported by a comprehensive resource outlining the development opportunities available at Aberystwyth to support

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them.

The screenshot shows the 'My action plans' page on the AberLearn Blackboard. The page title is 'My action plans' and it was edited by Julie Ann Keenan on 8/17/2010 at 3:23 PM, GMT. The page content includes a paragraph explaining that action planning is a simple process broken down into logical steps, followed by a numbered list of five steps: 1. Refer to your notes - what do you want to change or develop? These are your goals; 2. Pick at least one goal from any of the academic, career or personal areas of your life; 3. Give yourself the time to work out the practical steps needed to successfully achieve your goal (s); 4. Give yourself a realistic timescale to achieve each step and an overall timescale for each goal; 5. Monitor and review your action plan on a regular basis as you complete each step towards the achievement of your goal. Below the list, a paragraph states that action planning should not be something you do once and then forget, but rather an attitude towards your future with no limits that does not come to an end. It is a process that helps you to identify what you really want from your life and your career. It also helps you to: 

- become more self aware - an essential quality you really will need to be successful in employment and life in general
- face up to your own limitations, and to address these realistically - another essential employability attribute
- plan over the longer term towards goals that are important to you - and help you to realise your potential
- develop a habit of reflection on your performance, a process used and valued by employers in their annual review or appraisal systems.

 The right-hand sidebar contains a search box, a 'Pages' list with 'My action plans' expanded to show sub-pages like '1 Planning my future', '2 Academic action plan', '3 Career action plan', '4 Personal action plan', and '5 Celebrate success'; a 'Tags' section with 'No tags'; and a 'Page Contributors' section listing 'JULIE ANN KEENAN'.

5 **My department** – this page includes a form the student fills in to obtain a reference from the department. See 2 screen shots below for a sample of what is included. .

The screenshot shows the 'My department' page on the AberLearn Blackboard. The page title is 'My department' and it was edited by Julie Ann Keenan on 8/17/2010 at 3:37 PM, GMT. The page content includes a section titled 'Name and contact details of my personal tutor:' with a form field for 'Name: [Enter your personal tutor's name here]' and 'Email ID: [Enter your personal tutor's email address here]'. Below this is a section titled 'End of Year Summary Report - important information for your department for future employment references'. The text explains that this form will give a framework for thinking about university experiences and how they relate to postgraduate applications. It asks users to use a link to find out when the department expects completion and to ask their tutor for permission to use them as referees on their CV. The form starts with a 'Name:' label. The right-hand sidebar contains a search box, a 'Pages' list with 'My department' selected; a 'Tags' section with 'No tags'; and a 'Page Contributors' section listing 'JULIE ANN KEENAN'. A 'Latest Activity' section at the bottom shows 'JULIE ANN KEENAN updated "2 Academic Work." 4 days ago'.

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PRIFYSGOL ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY

JULIE ANN KEENAN My Places Home ? Help Logout

## AberLearn Blackboard

My Institution Courses

Brief report on progress this year including what you hope to gain from the development goal(s) you have set for yourself.

### 1 INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

List recent extra-curricular activities eg membership of societies, sports, involvement in the arts or local community, contributing to campus media or politics, expeditions and travel, whether inside or outside Aberystwyth University. Describe the nature of your involvement, especially if it reveals something significant about you, eg taking responsibility, showing initiative, ability to work in or lead a team, development of social skills, contribution to University or department.

Insert text here by clicking "edit" in the light grey box above. When done, click "save & edit" in the darker grey box below.

### 2 WORK EXPERIENCE

Include any experience of a working environment, whether as part of your course or before coming to university; also include work experience during vacations or voluntary work. Give dates, name of employer and a brief description of what you did, summarising what you gained from the experience such as the skills needed to do the job. Tip - you may already have this information on your CV. Cut and paste the relevant parts here. Indicate how your experience may be helpful in the future, especially if any of it is directly relevant to what you want to do after graduation.

updates 2 interests... 4 days ago  
 JULIE ANN KEENAN updated "Getting started." 4 days ago  
 JULIE ANN KEENAN updated "Semester 2." 4 days ago  
 View all activity

#### Supporting activity in 2009-10 session:

- PDP incorporated into institutional employability strategy and worked with pilot departments to deliver bespoke sessions for first year students.
- First year PDP Portfolio has been made available to all departments across the university.
- Second year PDP Portfolio developed for roll out in 2010-11. Implementation support includes meetings, presentations and resources developed to support personal tutors.
- PDP Portfolios enhanced to include uses of PDP by graduate employers and pages to support students learning through work experience and CV development.
- Work with eLearning team to ensure PDP Portfolio is incorporated into upgraded software.
- Further developed a variety of web pages for the Careers Service and departmental web pages to support the PDP Portfolio and student development and incorporated enhanced web pages from support departments across the university.
- Provided dedicated advice and guidance, supporting PDP Portfolio to students via weekly email and a "Drop In" facility in a computer room and via the student job shop. Delivered supporting workshop sessions to students via the Careers Service Employability Events Programme. Joint award of Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fund monies to Careers and Student Support has resulted in an online Personal Tutors toolkit available in 2010-11 including an area for PDP web pages.

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