

Personal development planning and employability

Learning and Employability Series 1 and 2

The Learning and Employability series is primarily intended for staff in higher education institutions who are considering the enhancement of student employability. The publications will be of interest to colleagues new to the area as well as those who are already engaged in developing employability and who wish to broaden their understanding of the topic.

In response to demand we have updated and reissued a number of titles from the first series of Learning and Employability, originally published by the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT). We welcome suggestions for new titles in the series: email employability@heacademy.ac.uk.

Titles currently available are:

Series 1

Employability and higher education: what it is – what it is not – Mantz Yorke

Employability: judging and communicating achievements – Peter Knight and Mantz Yorke

Embedding employability into the curriculum – Mantz Yorke and Peter Knight

Entrepreneurship and higher education: an employability perspective – Neil Moreland

Employability and work-based learning – Brenda Little and ESECT colleagues

Pedagogy for employability – The Pedagogy for Employability Group

Series 2

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Employability for research postgraduates – Janet Metcalfe and Alexandra Gray

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Ethics and employability – Simon Robinson

Career development learning and employability – A. G. Watts

Personal development planning and employability

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The Learning and Employability series is being extended by the Higher Education Academy and will reflect changing challenges and priorities in the relationship between higher education and the many work opportunities likely to need – or benefit from – graduate or postgraduate abilities. The views expressed in this series are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Academy.

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I. Finding your way around this document

We hope we have been successful in producing a paper that is coherent and sequential, and can therefore profitably be read from cover to cover.

We also recognise that busy colleagues sometimes need to take short cuts. So – if this applies to you – and you:

- want to focus upon approaches to relating PDP to the curriculum, you might see Section 4 as the best place to start
- want to consider implementation from a practitioner perspective then Section 5 might be your starting point
- want to focus upon an institutional support model, then Section 4 might provide a good way in
- are interested in how others are implementing practice at programme, departmental or institutional level, then Section 7 might provide some helpful ways in
- want to start with issues of student engagement, then go straight to Section 8.

2. Preview of key points

- There is a strong relationship between PDP and student employability, and this relationship is central to the development of learners' ability to identify, articulate and evidence their learning and overall development.
- Both PDP and work to support graduate employability emphasise the concept of 'sustainable employability'.
- The practical connections between PDP and employability can be categorised with reference to materials, via:
 - an 'anticipatory' approach, through a focus upon PDP-style materials to link with later professional practice
 - a 'supportive' approach, through the use of employer/CPD resources to legitimise the PDP process and catalyse student engagement with it
 - a 'contextual' focus, through the use of PDP approaches within locations (such as employer's premises) which are seen to be rich environments for what we might term 'direct employability learning'
 - as a process that enabled students to recognise, record and later draw upon evidence for the skills, qualities and capabilities they have developed for later presentation and to support the development of capabilities of self-management.
- In terms of embedding PDP within the curriculum, at the macro level a range of models can be identified (as an additional part of the student experience; in parallel with the curriculum but with some level of integration; embedded at certain times; in certain modules; and both embedded in the curriculum but also serving to integrate activities which occur outside).
- At least some aspects of students' personal development can be fostered by the environments created by their tutors, including the provision of rich feedback opportunities. This development can be 'measured' through different forms of assessment. Such assessment foregrounds and makes explicit for the learner the process of development and the qualities that are developing.
- Within conventional academic settings, learning environments can be designed for personal development when tutors are clear about the outcomes they are trying to foster. In work-based settings, less easy to structure, learners need to be clear about these outcomes and be able to recognise and monitor their own progress.
- A rich range of approaches to supporting practice can be identified.
- To get students to take PDP practice seriously we need to:
 - connect PDP practice to core academic activity
 - emphasise the process of PDP rather than the bureaucracy
 - encourage students to consider the benefits of engagement with PDP for them
 - support staff in ensuring that they understand the benefits of engagement

for students (and indeed for staff themselves).

This publication provides a resource for higher education institutions and others to support the implementation of PDP. Related work undertaken for QAAHE Scotland under the guidance of a Joint SACCA/Universities Scotland Working Group on the Implementation of Student PDP in Scotland has resulted in the publication of *Enhancing practice: Effective Learning and Employability* (Gordon, 2006). This may also be of interest to readers.

3. Introduction

Rob Ward

Employability and Personal Development Planning: defining our terms

In this paper we advance the proposition that the relationship between Personal Development Planning (PDP) and Employability is central to the development of learners' ability to identify, articulate and evidence their learning and overall development and that this, in turn, provides the key to effective progression through learning and work throughout life.

Whilst 'employability' has spawned a wide range of definitions, we focus upon that of the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT) which defined employability as:

'a set of skills¹, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and to be successful in their chosen occupation(s) to the benefits of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy' (Yorke, 2004, reissued 2006, p.10.)

This definition, and the explicit concern to connect support for learning and enhanced employability which marked out the ESECT approach, both emphasised employability as a process rather than a state and accorded a potentially strong role for Personal Development Planning (PDP) in the consideration of it. Elsewhere key members of the ESECT team (Knight and Yorke, 2004, p.9) argue for the importance of:

1. *"knowing' students — they need to know what they are supposed to be learning, how their achievements will be judged and for what purposes', and*
2. students developing ways of representing (complex) achievements to employers and graduate schools.

The development of policy in respect of Personal Development Planning in UK HE dates from the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (the

¹ We use the term 'skills' within this paper, partly at least in the recognition that academic staff themselves generally talk the language of skills. In doing so we also value the concerns within ESECT to try to talk of 'skilful practice', not least to get away from the simplistic connotations of skills.

Dearing Report, 1997). The original guidelines on Progress Files (QAA, 2001) incorporating Personal Development Planning (PDP):

- a. defined PDP as *'a structured and supported process to develop the capacity of individuals to reflect upon their own learning and achievement and to plan for their own personal educational **and career** development'* (emphasis added)
- b. stated that the *'primary objective for PDP is to improve the capacity of individuals to understand what and how they are learning, and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning, helping students:*
 - *become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners*
 - *understand how they are learning and relate their learning to a wider context*
 - *improve their general skills for study and career management*
 - *articulate personal goals and evaluate progress towards their achievement; and*
 - *encourage a positive attitude to learning throughout life.'*

While they would not claim to have inspired it, the development of both student self-understanding and the ability to present themselves accurately to others, as identified by Knight and Yorke, are explicitly identified within these Guidelines and in many if not all elements of PDP provision.

In the sections which follow we seek to pull together these ideas and the practical initiatives that have or are being developed to connect PDP practice with work in order to support the enhancement of student employability.

In **section 4** Mark Atlay considers the development of practice from a primarily structural perspective, i.e. what are the options when it comes to where and how PDP practice might be embedded in the curriculum, and how does this relate to the theme of this paper?

In **section 5** Janet Strivens looks at what might need to happen in order to support the development and assessment of student capabilities in this area inside the curriculum, regardless of the location of such practice.

In **section 6** Jane Stapleford and colleagues offer an institutional example of how such an initiative can be supported and resourced.

Section 7 seeks to relate all of this to what is happening 'on the ground' through short vignettes of a range of practice in different institutions. These are presented with reference to the classifications developed within this and the following section.

Finally, in **section 8** we consider the challenge of student engagement with PDP, for unless we can encourage students to take it seriously a lot of our good intentions will come to naught

Linking Personal Development Planning to employability

The purposes defined for PDP and cited above map closely on to the stated requirements of many 'blue chip' graduate employers. Here – and through the paper as a whole – we note such congruence, but do not seek to generate more lists of 'skills' that employers claim to seek. Some further discussion of these can be found in the companion volume in this series 'Pedagogy for Employability' (Pedagogy for Employability Group, 2006). Rather, we place the emphasis upon three ways in which PDP and Employability have become connected.²

This categorisation is not intended to provide a tight conceptual framework, but rather to reflect practice as it has developed in a way which helps practitioners to think anew about their own practice. Perhaps inevitably, we mix means, ends, focuses and rationales. In addition, these are not discrete alternatives and can themselves be mixed. For example, an emphasis upon using PDP practice in a workplace **context** is often employed with the intention of making the most of that experience, thereby also linking to the **rationale** cluster. Similarly, if a PDP approach within a professionally-recognised programme is applied to a placement experience then a **contextual** focus is indicated; if to the overall programme **using employer materials** an '**anticipatory**' approach might be suggested. Conversely, such employer materials used in a programme that does not provide a basis for professional progression might indicate a **supportive** use of materials, and also align with the **rationale** focus developed in more detail below.

Starting with **Materials**: through the direct use of employer approaches to facilitate career progression and/or provide a means of engaging learners with the PDP process.

Here it is necessary to distinguish between two rather differing rationales for practice.

Work to develop the '**anticipatory**' use of pdp-style process drawn from professional contexts to link directly with later professional practice, particularly in vocational programmes.³ For example, explicit attention has been given in some funded projects such as RAPID, where the initial 'Recording Achievement in Construction' Project (1998-2000) sought to promote a culture to enable and support students and graduates within the discipline of 'construction

2 In similar vein, Watts (2006, p19) offers three connections between PDP and career development learning.

3 Here we should also acknowledge, particularly in the context of the recent policy initiatives described above, that, in some vocational programmes 'many mature students may simultaneously be working within these fields. See also Section 6.

management⁴. There are currently fourteen versions of RAPID, with 12 discipline-specific versions (including Civil Engineering, Information Sciences, and Mathematics)⁵. In similar vein, the work of the Royal Society of Chemistry⁶ in developing Skills Records at both Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels also facilitates such connectivity, with the RSC noting that:

As the RSC membership structure stands at present, the record can provide evidence towards gaining Chartered Chemist (MRSC CChem) status. However, the RSC is currently reviewing its membership structure. If the proposed changes take place CPD records will become important for individual progression through the membership categories. For PhD students, the skills record is seen as the first stage of recording CPD.⁷

In addition, the use of employer and CPD practice has been extended and developed by Pauline Kneale as part of her National Teaching Fellowship.⁸ Here a broader range of employer and CPD materials has been employed in a subject area – Geography – that is less vocationally specific. As the website indicates, the aim is:

to enhance the use of personal development planning amongst HE students through the use of current performance and review documentation used by a range of companies.

Kneale's primary interest stems from a wish to improve students' understanding of the role(s) and purpose(s) of planning and reflection, in order that they do better as students and manage the many competing demands upon them. The approach seeks to harness employer approaches to support planning processes within the HE setting. The primary purpose is '**supportive**', i.e. the use of external resources to legitimise the PDP process and catalyse student engagement with it. Rather than being oriented towards defined routes for progression, materials are drawn upon to support learner engagement and motivation by confirming that 'PDP congruent' practice is not confined to HE.

4 See <http://rapid.lboro.ac.uk/> accessed 29 April 2006.

5 See <http://rapidprojects.lboro.ac.uk/progress.html> accessed 31 May 2006.

6 See www.dfes.gov.uk/dfee/heqe/rsc_rep.htm accessed 29 April 2006.

7 See www.chemsoc.org/careers/toolkit/pcsept00.htm accessed 31 May 2006.

8 See www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/courses/other/performance/pdpindex.html accessed 29 April 2006.

Starting with **Contexts**: through the use of PDP approaches within locations (such as employers' premises) which are seen to be rich environments for what we might term 'direct employability learning'.⁹

This practice is supported by a number of well-developed schemes for supporting and accrediting work-based and off-campus learning which incorporate elements of a PDP approach. The City and Guilds Professional Development Award (which is also a pathway to the City & Guilds Licentiate) requires candidates to compile a diary of evidence over a period of work-based or other activity and to write a summary report detailing and evidencing development. The British Council has developed a Year Abroad Log which serves a similar function for language students, particularly those working as Assistants in schools (Hoggan, 2006). The current work of Student Volunteering England to develop a 'Toolkit on how volunteering enhances employability'¹⁰ provides a further perspective on this.

The value of work experience to graduates is emphasised on many HE Careers Services websites¹¹, and by employers themselves. Equally if not more important, is the ability of candidates to evidence their development through such experience (see e.g. Little et al (2004/2006), section 4)¹². Evidence (see e.g. Harvey, Moon and Geall, (1997)), suggests that such graduates can make a more significant impact in employment more quickly. More recently the work of Mason et al (2003) into First Destination Statistical data showed that after controlling for gender, age, intellectual ability (A-level scores), degree class, degree subject and other potential influences, the chances of graduates being employed six months after graduation were positively and significantly associated with them having participated in a sandwich placement during their studies. In the same study over two thirds of line managers considered sandwich placements or 'other relevant work experience' as important criteria for filling the jobs held by graduates. In similar vein Prospects HE reported that:

'According to the Pay and Progression for Graduates 2005 survey of 96 employers from the Incomes Data Services (IDS), over a third (37.4%) of students who did a

9 Though we also acknowledge that smaller organisations in particular may have difficulty in actually providing placements and may instead offer 'proxy activities' e.g. in the case of 'New Media' Foundation Degrees, instead providing design briefs for students to work on in their own time and/or at their own institution. An illustration of the 'simulation' approach applied to different curriculum areas can be found in section 4.

10 See Deepak, S, in www.recordingachievement.org/downloads/pdpukjune06.pdf (accessed 3 July 2006).

11 See e.g. www.services.ex.ac.uk/cas/employability/wevalue.shtml (accessed 01 October 2006) which also reports a survey undertaken by the National Council for Work Experience in 2002 indicating that 'employers from 5 European nations listed work experience in their top ten desirable graduate attributes'.

12 For an interesting employer perspective see www.pwc.com/uk/eng/car-inexp/graduate/improving-enhancing-demonstrating.html (accessed 29 April 2006).

sandwich placement went on to accept a position with the employer they did their placement with. The equivalent figure for those who did vacation work was even higher at 47%. A further pointer to the advantage of work experience in gaining a graduate position has been revealed through research of some 66 graduate employers by the University of Manchester and UMIST Careers Service in 2004. Their research shows that an average of 70% of work experience summer or year long placements lead to a graduate job offer.¹³

There is somewhat of a virtuous/vicious circle here, as the results of a survey by the National Council for Work Experience confirmed that *'the main reason why employers take on work experience placement students is to find suitable permanent staff (62%). One employer noted that they see work experience as a way to source quality graduates ahead of the milkround. The majority of employers (73%) have recruited students on a permanent basis as a result of work experience placements'*.¹⁴ However, the positive impact of such experience during undergraduate study would appear to be confined to the early stages of graduate careers; the effects on graduates' performance at a later stage, such as salary levels after one to three years, are found to diminish rapidly over time as graduates acquire more job-related skills through experience and on-the-job training. We therefore conclude that graduates with such experience can most appropriately be said to be in possession of what has been termed *'immediate employability'* (Watts, 2006).

Finally, we should note that, from a work-based learning perspective, Personal Development Planning was built into the original design specification for foundation degrees though an informal survey carried out by *Foundation Degree Forward* (quoted in Strivens 2006, unpublished) suggests that there has been a wide variety of approaches adopted, some of which were not implemented from the start of the degree programme but have been developed subsequently. In implementation, the tendency is towards curriculum-centred practice; vignettes drawn from such practice feature in section 5.

13 See www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/showpage/home_page/what_do_graduates_do_2006/Employability_and_myths_uncovered/plepmigxc (accessed 29 April 2006).

14 See www.work-experience.org/cms/showpage/home_page/practitioners/resource_centre/published_research/pledcafbf (accessed 29 April 2006).

Starting with rationale, by focussing upon PDP as a process that – implemented effectively – will of itself:

- support effective learning
- provide a context within which graduates may recognise, record and from which they may later evidence their development of the skills, qualities and capabilities that employers claim to seek and
- inculcate the processes of self-management that will support what Watts (2006) terms ‘sustainable employability’.

The objectives for the implementation of PDP offer both explicit links to employability, and identify a broader range of policy concerns. All however are potentially connected with employability, especially if we recognise that, just as with Enterprise in Higher Education before it, a simple relationship between PDP and employability – emphasising only a context-based relationship - has been further challenged through recent development work. The Universities UK/CSU report *Enhancing Employability, Recognising Diversity* (Harvey et al., 2002, p.17) states that employability development has three focuses: development of employability attributes; willingness to learn **and reflect on learning** (emphasis added); and development of self-promotional and career management skills. In a companion volume to this Moon (2004), quoting research with employers, noted that: ‘ideas such as willingness to learn, self-motivation, self-evaluation and self-management were cited frequently. These both underpin and are underpinned by what we now understand as reflective activity.’ She emphasised PDP processes both as preparatory activities for workplace practice and as a means of supporting effective entry into employment through the development of the levels of self-awareness and language necessary for effective self-presentation. Such processes, of developing self-understanding and representing self (and learning) to new audiences, are of course equally applicable within and between programmes of study.

From an employment perspective, research for the Association of Graduate Recruiters, reported by Fielding (2006) highlighted the key importance of graduate self-development in terms of adding value to organisational success 3-7 years into their careers. Such individuals were reported as being ‘outstanding at Self-Directed Learning – taking the initiative to approach people to learn from them, seeking feedback and learning well from mistakes’. In the work of Elias and Purcell (2004), the focus upon ‘the ability to be self-directed’ was one of the most frequently mentioned requirements of jobs, and one of the aspects of undergraduate education and experience most often sought by employers and drawn upon on a day-to-day basis.

In addition, Hustler et al (1998) in reporting upon ‘the integrated approach’ to the development of Career Management Skills in HE, explicitly noted the use of such

approaches as learning logs to support the 'personal integration' of learning by individual students.

The ESECT approach to employability enlarged the focus in two ways, by:

- emphasising the significance of claiming evidence for achievement which can be presented to others as a basis for progression
- emphasising employability as a process rather than a state, a position which connects well with the term '*sustainable employability*' (Watts, 2006).

Knight and Yorke (2003) have described employability as a blend of understanding, skilful practices, efficacy beliefs (or legitimate self confidence) and reflectiveness (or metacognition). In this 'USEM' model the 'E' – for efficacy beliefs, student self theories and personal qualities and the 'M' – for self awareness and the ability to reflect, are both highly pertinent to PDP practice, particularly given the emphasis in a recent consultation (Ward et al, 2005) placed by practitioners on PDP as a holistic and integrated set of processes¹⁵. Furthermore, the same practitioners also placed a consistent emphasis on the role of PDP processes in the development of student self-identity.

Jackson and Ward (2004) argue for the significance of PDP in encouraging the development of students' metacognitive and self-regulatory capacities (Zimmerman, 2000) and helping learners recognise and record their own learning and achievement, as a primary means of representing 'transdisciplinary learning' (Gibbons et al 1994) in a meaningful way to a range of audiences. PDP also explicitly seeks to develop the habits and behaviours that are necessary for a life of learning, thereby reinforcing the process and sustainability themes identified above, and echoing the emphasis placed upon 'strategic and managerial skills' by Purcell et al (2004).

Such writing also appears to have had some impact upon policy considerations. The Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Scoping Group (the Burgess Group)¹⁶ was set up to take forward this aspect of the agenda identified within the HE White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003)¹⁷ Recommendation 6 of the report of the Measuring and Recording Achievement Scoping Group (Universities UK, 2004) explicitly supported the implementation of PDP:

'higher education institutions should continue to implement Personal Development Planning within the Guidelines developed by the Progress File Implementation Group.

15 Thus effective thinking ahead involves reflection and is connected to self-evaluation (analysis) and involves recording – completing a planning template for example.

16 <http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/measuringachievement.pdf>

17 At www.dfes.gov.uk/hegateway/uploads/white%20pape.pdf (accessed 29 April 2006).

There should continue to be evaluation of learning and the representation of learning and achievement of different forms of Personal Development Planning.'

In addition, the overall tenor of the report emphasised four further thematic points which implicitly connect PDP to the measuring and recording student achievement agenda:

- The importance of the representation of learning not only summatively, but also formatively, to support reflective thinking by the student.
- The need to represent student learning and achievement in a wider and more holistic way.
- The need to represent a wider range of learning - not only subject based learning but also '*personally recognised learning*' and learning in respect of the development of such capabilities as self-evaluation, analysis, and problem solving (an emphasis which itself reinforces the transdisciplinary focus of Jackson and Ward, op cit).
- The more dynamic emphasis placed upon PDP as '*a way of engaging students in representing their own learning, in creating customised information about their learning and achievements and communicating this information to different audiences with different needs and interests*'.

The following sections seek to develop and progress themes reflected here. In section 7 we make use of the categorisation developed above as one means of considering vignettes of practice.

4. Embedding PDP practice in the Curriculum

Mark Atlay

Introduction

This section examines some of the different ways in which PDP processes have been structured and supported, and the issues that need to be considered when thinking about integrating PDP into the curriculum whether at the macro (programme) or micro (module¹⁸) level. Given the focus of the publication, the emphasis is on how PDP might be embedded within the curriculum in order to support graduate employability.

Why embed?

The guidelines developed to support the implementation of the HE Progress File (QAA, 2001) do not make it a requirement that PDP is embedded within the curriculum; merely that it is a 'structured and supported' process. The following points have been put forward in support of adopting a more embedded approach.

- *It supports learning:* PDP prepares students for academic study by emphasising learning processes and skills. Therefore it should be an integral part of the curriculum.
- *All students can benefit from PDP:* as academic staff we want all of our students to become 'more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners' – embedding ensures they all have this opportunity.
- *A common and coherent student experience:* integration holds out the prospect that all students will have experienced similar opportunities, aiding teaching and student management.
- *More effective use of resources:* an additional optional process will waste scarce resources (human, written, electronic etc.).
- *Preparation for life beyond university:* PDP processes are widely used in 'professional' life as part of continuing professional development (CPD) and all students need to be prepared for this as well as for life beyond university.

18 The term "module" is used here to denote a sub-element within a programme of study.

- *Belief*: embedding sends a clear message to all those involved (students and staff) that PDP is valued.

Furthermore, embedding PDP approaches can help support aspects of employability such as work experience (structured or unstructured) and volunteering by providing a process which encourages students to make the link between these experiences and their learning and development.

Where to start?

Whatever the drivers for adopting a more embedded approach, there are two key questions that need to be considered:

- What do I need to get out of linking PDP and the curriculum?

and – perhaps more importantly:

- What do my students need to get out of linking PDP and the curriculum?

Three strands to what PDP might deliver can be identified and can be used to help define more precisely the aims for embedding:

Strand 1: PDP is about students' academic learning;

Strand 2: PDP is about students' personal development; and

Strand 3: PDP is about careers and employability¹⁹.

The different emphasis each of these strands places on aspects of the curriculum is given in Table 1. The term 'emphasis' is important here; as in the previous section the strands are not intended to be mutually exclusive and there is clear overlap between them. For example, a well-designed and implemented academic curriculum which focuses on subject knowledge and understanding, and where PDP supports the development of higher-order cognitive skills, will also support the personal development and employability of students.

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Both strands 1 and 2 also support employability although more indirectly.

Characteristic	Emphasis is on:		
	Academic strand	Personal strand	Employability strand
Source of experience	Curriculum	Extra-curricular activities	Work experience
Enabling skills and attitudes	Academic skills (essay writing, exam technique etc) and subject-specific skills	Self-management and motivation	Employability skills (team work, presentational and interviewing skills, commercial awareness, etc)
Higher-order skills	Creativity, problem solving, analysis, critical reflection etc.	Metacognition and self-regulatory skills	Career management skills
Connectivity	Theory and the real-world, and can make connections across modules/levels	Planning route through module choice, balancing wider commitments and study, career choice etc.	Curriculum and real-world 'professional' practice.
Ethical emphasis	Academic conventions and codes of practice	Personal ethics and values	Professional codes
Preparation for ...	Further study/research	Life	Employment
Most likely to emphasise	PDP and the supportive/anticipatory use of materials	PDP as a process	PDP as a context.

Table 1: Emphasis given to different characteristics by the three PDP strands.²⁰

The emphasis that you will want to place on PDP will be dependent on your views about the relationship between the curriculum and PDP (an audit tool is provided in the appendix to assist with auditing the curriculum against the above dimensions) and other factors such as:

- institutional and/or departmental strategies and policies on teaching and

²⁰ We include this table again at the end of the section for anyone who might want to copy and use it as part of an auditing and reviewing activity.

- learning, employability etc.;
- the nature of the subject discipline;
- whether there are curriculum elements such as work experience, placements etc. that need to be included;
- the effectiveness of personal tutoring systems and their role in relation to the curriculum;
- professional body requirements or expectations;
- the typical background of your students (experience, prior educational experience and attainment, ethnicity, self-efficacy etc);
- views of colleagues; and
- the availability of any e-portfolio system or other support mechanism.

Curriculum models

Once the aims of PDP have been identified, the next question is to consider how PDP can be incorporated into the curriculum. The choice is between working with the existing curriculum structure (i.e. adopt an evolutionary approach to curriculum development) or opting for a radical redesign (a revolutionary approach). This section gives some indication of strategies which can be adopted in linking and embedding PDP into the curriculum. The approaches are not mutually exclusive and mixed or intermediate modes are possible: the intention is to give a flavour of possible curriculum models.

Macro models

The first strategy which can be adopted is to view PDP as an *additional* part of the student experience. Here students may be provided with opportunities to engage in PDP, and encouraged to undertake them, but these are optional and additional to the curriculum and students are left to their own, with minimal support, to decide whether they should engage. This model is represented in figure 1, and vignettes from a wider range of institutions which illustrate it are provided from page 48.

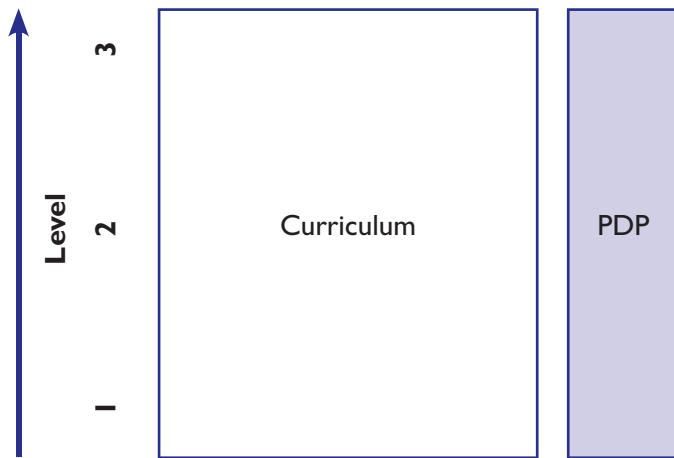


Figure 1: The additional model

The shaded PDP element runs parallel to the curriculum but there is limited integration between the two. Students maintain their own portfolio deciding what to include and undertaking their own analyses and reflections. The institution provides structure, perhaps in the nature of a Progress File (either paper-based or electronic) and support via paper-based materials and optional discussions with tutors or PDP advisors.

The second strategy is to run PDP in parallel with the curriculum but *integrated* so that there are explicit links between the two. The linkages may only occur at certain points (related to activities in certain modules) or throughout the course. In this model the PDP element and the curriculum are distinct (see figure 2a).

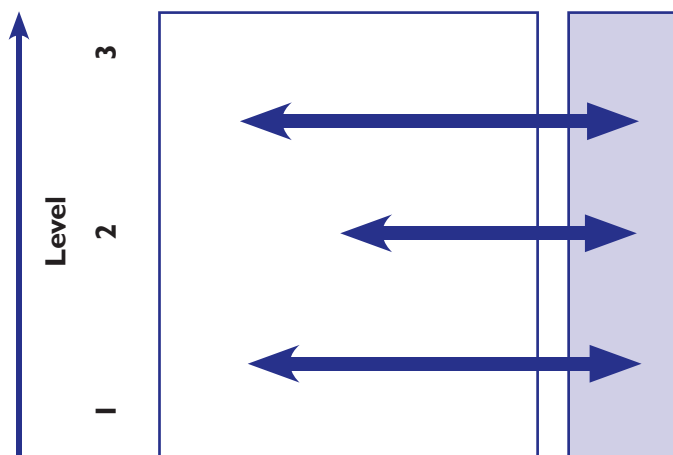


Figure 2a: An integrated model

Students are given activities as part of the course which emphasise PDP and link to their Progress File. These may be either an optional or compulsory part of the curriculum. Examples might include diagnostic assessments, reflections on work experience, and personal logs and diaries.

An alternative approach is to embed at certain times activities which have a PDP stance and which encourage students to reflect on their progress and development but are not necessarily linked to any one module or unit. Examples here include the use of induction to introduce PDP and Progress Files, compulsory sessions as part of personal tutoring, skills weeks, work experience and extra-curricular activities etc. A further example of this is provided on page 64.

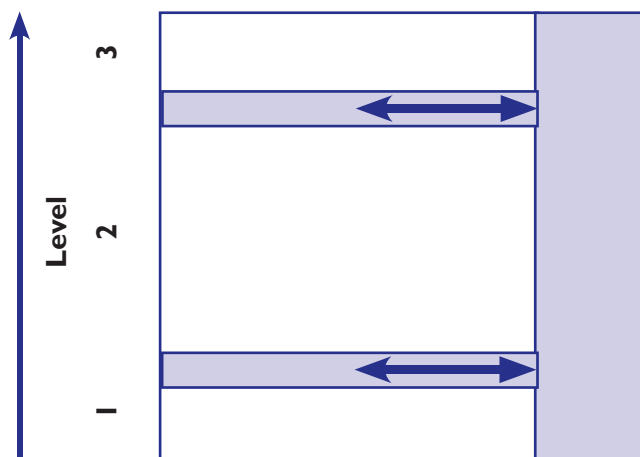


Figure 2b: An alternative integrated model

The third strategy is to embed PDP in certain modules. These modules provide the main support for PDP and may serve to link with material studied in other modules. They will also link out to the student's Progress File. Such modules may have a skills and/or a subject focus as well as emphasising PDP processes. There may be any number of such modules within the curriculum (depending on the balance, module size etc.) but they tend to be more likely at HE level 1 with students engaging more independently in PDP at higher levels. A model with such a module at each level is represented in figure 3. The module tutors for these modules tend to take primary responsibility for PDP development and support. Several examples of this approach are provided on pages 58 and 66-78.

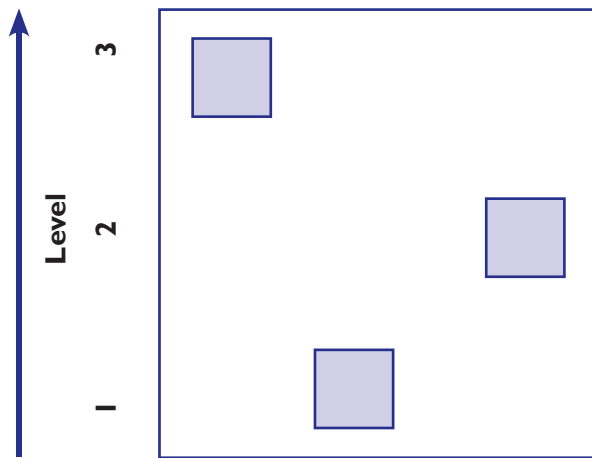


Figure 3: The modular model

The fourth strategy can be viewed as a whole curriculum approach where most modules involve activities which are aligned with PDP processes and thus PDP is *embedded* throughout the curriculum. In such a model reflective approaches underpin the delivery of the curriculum and the students' Progress File becomes a record of their curriculum activities and personal development. An extreme of this model is represented in figure 4 where each module will emphasise PDP processes and make a varying contribution to the Progress File. In this model PDP and the curriculum are inextricably linked and every module tutor has a responsibility for supporting PDP.

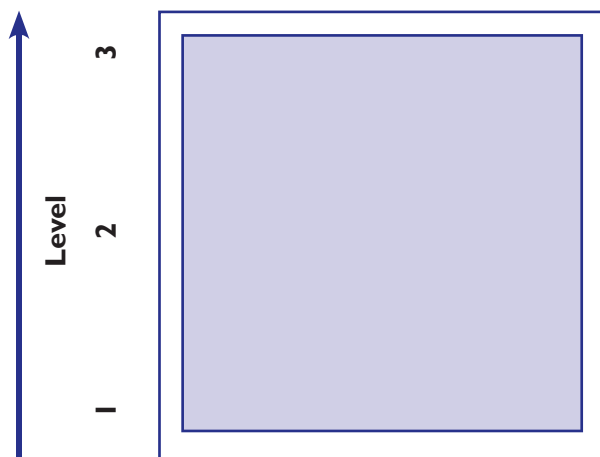


Figure 4: The embedded model

The final model is the curriculum plus model where PDP processes are embedded in the curriculum but also serve consciously to integrate activities which occur outside the curriculum. Such a model is most often found where students are working in an area related to the topic they are studying. Here PDP consciously serves to provide the link between the academic curriculum and these wider experiences. This is represented in the following figure, and the model is typically found in areas such as social work and nursing but can also be adapted to other areas as the illustrations on pages 89–90 demonstrate.

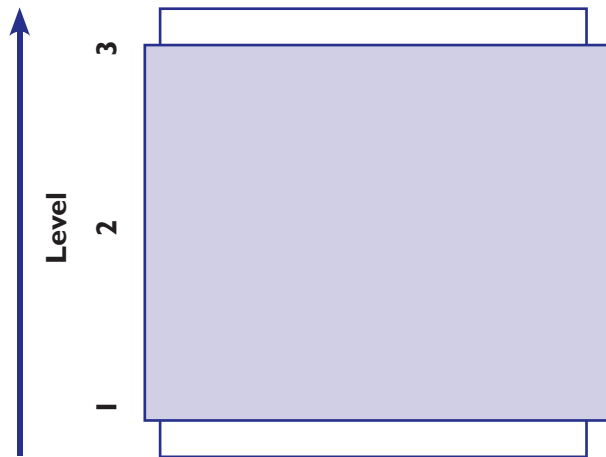


Figure 5: The curriculum plus model

Advantages and disadvantages of the models

The possible advantages and disadvantages are shown in table 2.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Additional	Simple, places onus on the student, minimal disruption to the existing curriculum, less resource required.	Not all students will engage, students' experience will vary; resource may be wasted. Doesn't prepare students for the transition into employment.
Integrated	Student experience is more controlled, some (but minimal) disruption to the curriculum and may build on existing activities such as induction and tutoring	Students may still choose not to engage and hence impact on student learning for those most likely to gain may be minimal
Modular	All students will experience PDP at some stage. PDP can be tightly controlled and built upon.	Experience may be fragmented, PDP modules may be seen by staff and students as being of low value. Only those teaching the modules know what PDP is about.
Embedded	Becomes part of student and staff thinking in all modules and hence an approach to work and study.	Difficult to get all staff to implement, maybe become so embedded as to be invisible (and non-existent).
Curriculum +	Becomes a holistic way of working, draws in work and life experience.	Activities beyond the curriculum are varied and uncontrollable, learning will be as well. Some may see this as a problem - particularly those who like to have clear outcomes.

Table 2: Advantages and disadvantages of different models of embedding.

Whilst examples of the different models can be found in a variety of different contexts, there is a tendency for curricula which emphasise the academic strand to adopt a structure more towards the 'additional' end of this spectrum (because it involves minimum interruption to existing structures and requires less understanding of PDP processes by staff delivering and supporting the curriculum). Those that favour employability are more likely to be towards the embedded end because many aspects of employability require systematic support and development. The 'curriculum plus' model supports curricula which place a high emphasis on the personal development strand and is more likely to be used with mature students who have a wide variety of extra-curricular experience on which to build.

Micro models

When consciously embedding PDP into the curriculum at the module level there are a number of issues that need to be considered:

- how the module builds on previous PDP activities – what will the students’ expectations be? Will PDP need explaining or will the students already have a good grasp?²¹
- how the module relates to other activities being undertaken at the time; and
- the approach being taken to PDP in the programme as a whole.

A range of different approaches to embedding PDP into modules can be identified which broadly mirror those outlined above at the macro level. However, if an ‘embedded’ or ‘curriculum plus’ model is adopted at the programme level then there is at least an expectation that any module will address PDP issues in a way consonant with that for the programme as a whole.

The next stage is to consider what you want the students to gain from PDP. The audit tool given in the appendix may prove helpful here but you may have your own views about the role of PDP in relation to your students and your curriculum.

Developing deep and meaningful reflective skills is important in underpinning PDP and two dimensions to this can be identified. The first emphasises ‘**introspection**’ and the students’ ability to reflect on and internalise their personal aims, skills, abilities etc. This reflective element is well documented elsewhere²². The second emphasises ‘**extrospection**’ and the ability to make connections between what I’m doing now and what I know, what I’ve done before or what I’ve seen others do. Within the curriculum this means helping students make the links with wider experiences such as employment, volunteering, sports etc. and between elements of the curriculum – what I’m studying in this module and concurrent or prior learning. Students are often poor at making such connections.

The typical approaches used to support PDP processes include diagnostic assessments and reflective activities such as logs, diaries, blogs, and portfolios. However, whatever the means of curriculum delivery (lectures, seminars, tutorials, laboratory work, work experience, e-learning etc.), activity (case studies, simulations, critical incident analysis, etc) or assessment (diagnostic, formative or summative) there is always the possibility of building in PDP by providing a structured activity (and time) for students to consider:

Before Planning - what am I going to do, what is the aim of this activity, how does this relate to other things I have done or know about, what am I likely to learn from this?

21 There may be a further issue here when students build up different programmes from a menu of modules such that the connection between PDP and programme is varied.

22 See www.heacademy.ac.uk/3130.htm for links (accessed 28 June 2006).

During	Thoughts and feelings whilst undertaking activities - whilst it's often difficult to capture ideas, students can be encouraged to consciously think about these and, perhaps, jot down thoughts for later review.
After	Immediate impressions - what did I do, what happened, what worked/didn't work, how did I feel about it?
Later	Considered reflection - what did I learn, how does this relate to academic learning, employment and future activities? Returning to review initial thoughts and experiences helps the embedding of deep learning.

PDP, Employability and Staff Development

Whatever model is adopted to support PDP and employability, it will achieve only limited success unless those teaching and supporting the curriculum understand what is trying to be achieved and their role in delivering it. You can't influence the students if you can't influence the staff.

Staff resistance can be high with PDP being seen as a transient 'fad' and another imposition which takes their time and detracts students away from studying their subject. So what strategies can be adopted to help staff gain an understanding of what is intended? This will very much depend on the culture in which you operate and the 'levers' you have at your disposal but suggestions include the following.

- Work in relation to the current state of development (i.e. from 'where course teams and individuals currently are), since much PDP may already be present in the curriculum and it may be just a case of making it explicit and making connections.
- Call it something else other than PDP – it is not the name that matters but the process. This allows for a clear acknowledgement that different terms and rationales might resonate with different subjects of study, and for staff teams to frame the terminology and its meaning in a context which they understand can lead to greater local ownership.
- Link it where possible to professional standards and practices – this gives it some additional external authority.
- Work with staff at both the team and individual levels to ensure the clarity of the approach and consistency of implementation.
- Write it into quality assurance process and procedures so that it becomes part of the fabric of the institution.
- Make sure that it has the support of senior managers and those key individuals who influence staff opinion.

- Do not expect staff to immediately embrace the notion – give them time and space to work with it.
- Evaluate the impact, share good practice and further develop the model.

Good curriculum design assists effective teaching and student learning. The considered use of PDP processes can help to integrate student development and employability and embed effective, deep and meaningful learning throughout the student's programme of study.

Appendix: Three steps to auditing and reviewing (your own) practice

Characteristic	Emphasis is on:		
	Academic strand	Personal strand	Employability strand
Source of experience	Curriculum	Extra-curricular activities	Work experience
Enabling skills and attitudes	Academic skills (essay writing, exam technique etc) and subject-specific skills	Self-management and motivation	Employability skills (team work, presentational and interviewing skills, commercial awareness, etc)
Higher-order skills	Creativity, problem solving, analysis, critical reflection etc.	Metacognition and self-regulatory skills	Career management skills
Connectivity	Theory and the real-world, and can make connections across modules/levels	Planning route through module choice, balancing wider commitments and study, career choice etc.	Curriculum and real-world 'professional' practice.
Ethical emphasis	Academic conventions and codes of practice	Personal ethics and values	Professional codes
Preparation for ...	Further study/research	Life	Employment
Most likely to emphasise	PDP and the supportive/anticipatory use of materials	PDP as a process	PDP as a context.

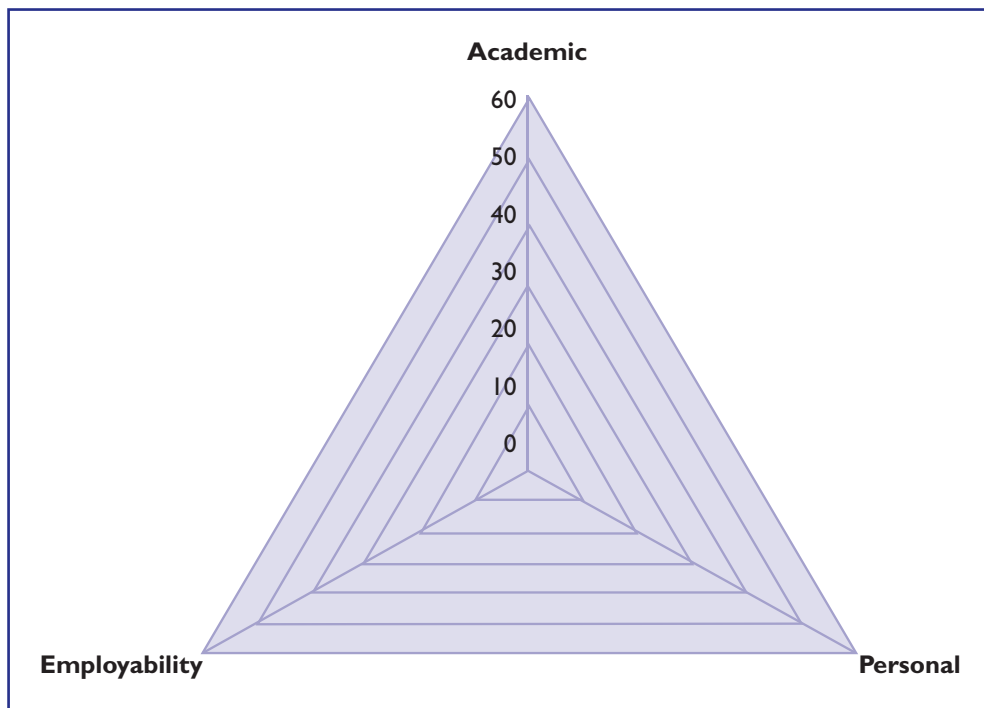
Table I: Emphasis given to different characteristics by the three PDP strands

The set of characteristics identified in Table I can be used to audit the current (or intended) place of PDP in terms of the provider's view of the curriculum. Table I provides an indicative tool which can be useful in helping programme teams consider what it is they are trying to achieve.

In order to do this, for each characteristic, distribute ten points across the three strands.

Characteristic	Academic	Personal	Employability	Total
Source of experience				10
Enabling skills and attitudes				10
Higher-order skills				10
Connectivity				10
Ethical emphasis				10
Preparation for				10
Total				60

Add up the scores for each strand to give an overall score. The curriculum can then be represented visually using a three-dimensional radar graph.



Some questions

Is the overall balance between the three dimensions appropriate for:

- the curriculum?
- my students?

If the balance is not what you wish the curriculum to deliver then go back to your original allocation of points and adjust one or more of the points to gain the correct balance. Then consider how this change of emphasis would need to be incorporated into the curriculum.

5. From the inside: supporting and assessing personal development

Janet Strivens

UK higher education institutions have typically accepted a role in complementing learners' formal education by a more general personal development. Depending on institutional cultures and resources, this role may be interpreted in a limited way as providing reactive support when problems arise or, more extensively, as aiming to help students to become more autonomous and self-directed and more able to choose, direct, manage and evaluate their learning throughout life. Personal tutoring systems formalise this support but educational relationships formed within the institution often provide the most important source of support for students' personal development as well as their academic progress.

In the current context, pressure on resources has led to a reduction in both formal and informal support mechanisms. This highlights the importance of personal development planning (PDP) as an attempt to systematise and guarantee the availability of such support. If PDP is regarded as an entitlement, and particularly linked in institutional thinking to issues of student employability (see Brennan and Shah, 2003) questions arise about the precise nature of what the system is trying to achieve, and how the support itself can be provided in ways which are effective, efficient and non-discriminatory.

So what is personal development?

'Personal development' is a term which means different things to different people. During 2005 the Centre for Recording Achievement carried out a consultation across the sector to assess progress towards the implementation of PDP (Ward et al, 2005). This consultation confirmed that staff saw the PDP initiative as being essentially about supporting the development of the self-identity of the learner. But what is the 'self-identity' of the learner and how would we know it was developing? Is personal development a process or an outcome? And why does having a strong sense of personal identity seem to be such a desirable quality?

Similar questions were asked in a workshop called 'PDP: Back to Basics?' led by Jamie Thompson (University of Northumbria) at the 2005 CRA national

residential seminar²³. Participants shared their ideas about the meaning of personal development and three key elements were identified in their discussions: self-awareness; capacity to change and adapt; and dialogue with and about the self.

Listening to such discussions among practitioners about what they are trying to achieve, it is possible to identify a range of characteristics we want for our students which would seem to be linked to the development of a sense of personal identity. We want our students to:

- be able to make judgements about their skills and abilities which accurately reflect their performance as we assess it;
- see the relevance and be willing to invest effort in developing these skills further;
- be confident in their ability to learn and to achieve desired goals, but tempered by a realistic self-knowledge which will not lead to disappointment and demoralisation;
- be motivated to engage with problems and seek solutions rather than ignoring them, whether these are 'troublesome concepts' (Meyer and Land, 2005) in their academic course, difficulties in personal relationships or challenges in the workplace;
- develop and espouse values which are consonant with society at large, some of which are exemplified in good academic practice, such as truth-seeking and respect for evidence and others which may best be acquired in work-based settings, such as tolerance of diversity and respect for the contributions of others to a common effort;
- be able to work out what values are really important to them, pursue these personal values, recognise when they are under threat and be prepared to stand by them.

This is an ambitious set of outcomes. They mix skills development, emotional awareness, attitudinal development, values clarification and a degree of moral education. They are also highly consonant with the ESECT definition of employability, elaborating some of the key terms in that definition. There is perhaps more stress on personal values than is usually found in lists of employability attributes. But employers know that we live in a rapidly changing world and the organisations which adapt and thrive are those which have clear visions of what they are trying to achieve. Arguably, men and women with a strong sense of their own values (provided these are tempered with the societal values of reason and tolerance) can make more firmly-based commitments to the organisations they work for, and later on provide the leadership those organisations will need.²⁴ .

23 In a report on this workshop, Thompson notes the resonances between these discussions and the findings of the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) Project of the seven characteristics of 'robust' (lifelong) learners: orientation to growth, adaptation and change, capacity to make personal meaning from information, critical curiosity, strategic awareness, resilience and learning relationships.

24 This view of the importance of a clear vision and an understanding of organisational values is

Can personal development be taught?

An argument often used to dispute the place of PDP within higher education is that personal development is not something that can be taught like a subject. Looking at the list of outcomes above, the more appropriate question seems to be whether we can set up the conditions within which they can be learned. Conventional higher education settings provide many contexts in which the generic skills of communication, teamwork, problem-solving, project management and so on can be practised and refined, and in the previous section Mark Atlay has provided a range of ways in which PDP can be built structurally into (or alongside) the curriculum. In such curricular contexts students can be given responsibility for tasks and teams and get feedback on their performance from multiple perspectives. These experiences will develop their skills, confidence and judgement, all important aspects of our holistic concept of personal development. We can also make use of employer materials for planning and recording, not least by building upon the pioneering work of Pauline Kneale at the University of Leeds²⁵.

What about developing self-knowledge? It is not at all clear that we know the best ways of developing students' abilities to think critically and make judgements within their subject. It is even less clear that having developed these abilities in relation to their subject, students can then apply them to themselves and their personal lives. We all form conceptions of ourselves, our likes and dislikes, our skills and personal qualities, from the ways we are aware of ourselves reacting to life's experiences. Unlike our developing subject-based concepts, however, these are rarely made explicit and compared with others' views of us in a systematic way. Also developing conceptions about oneself almost inevitably involves feelings, as we are bound up in the experiences we are trying to make sense of.

What does good, sensitive pedagogic support to this process look like? Many of the possible techniques are familiar from other fields. A 'life coach' helps an individual think through personal goals and motivations to plan future actions. The concept of a mentor or 'critical friend' has wide currency, referring to someone who will help one 'debrief' an experience, in terms of standards of performance, actions taken and their consequences and, crucially, the emotions experienced. There are also some popular tools, in the form of standardised tests which put together responses to questions about past or hypothetical experiences to give a predictive profile. Self-report and self-assessment is balanced by multiple perspectives on an experience from other participants.

demonstrated particularly by some of the larger employers which are household names: see the Co-operative Groups' statement of principles at www.co-op.co.uk (accessed 12 August 2006) and the KPMG website at www.kpmg.co.uk/about and www.kpmg.co.uk/about/csr/index.cfm (accessed 12 August 2006).

25 See www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/courses/other/performance/pdpindex22_9_03.html (accessed 29/09/06)

These techniques should improve learners' capacity to judge their own performance and may also help them in analysing their personal values and goals. Both are important prerequisites in students developing ways of representing their complex achievements to employers and graduate schools.

This still leaves us with the key issues of motivation and values. It is perhaps less easy to address these in conventional educational contexts. In a highly structured, modularised, credit-based and learning outcomes-driven system there may be limited incentive for learners to seek out real challenges, to move outside their 'comfort zone' in tackling new problems and developing new skills for their own sake, rather than because they have been told to do so and because they know they will be assessed only on the stated learning outcomes. The culture of academic departments may not provide fertile ground for conflicts of values and the presentation of significant moral and ethical issues for which there is no obvious institutional solution. We therefore need to turn to different, more naturalistic contexts, and to the use of PDP approaches within the rich environments for 'direct employability learning' identified on page 3.

Increasingly students in higher education have the opportunity to learn from the workplace, on clinical placements, work-based learning modules, sandwich years and so on. Here the learning experiences by definition are not carefully selected and paced: on the contrary, the learning environment is rich but unstructured, sometimes chaotic. It depends on the learner noticing things both about the environment and about his or her own reactions, recognising them as significant in some way, analysing them and comparing them with previously-formulated ideas and beliefs. The quality, depth and pace of learning are therefore hugely dependent on the learner's motivation and values, and not just on prior skills and knowledge. Workplace supervisors and mentors are in the best position to make learners more aware of this and to encourage their curiosity, initiative and tenacity but they cannot supply these qualities.

Can personal development be assessed²⁶?

What would count as evidence that the outcomes gathered together above under the heading of personal development had been achieved? This issue of assessment, particularly if we include student self-assessment, also takes us to PDP as a process, the third context for linking PDP to employability considered in section 1.

In varying degrees, all the outcomes above need to be evidenced from both the learner's perspective (through self-report) and from what can be inferred by the

26 Though likely to be more tightly defined, the issue of assessment of student development in HE has some affinity with processes of appraisal and continuing professional development beyond it.

tutor, mentor or workplace supervisor from observing the learner's behaviour. Certainly how they apply their skills can be observed, whether they tackle new tasks with enthusiasm or reluctance and whether the values they claim to espouse are instantiated in their behaviour. A workplace setting provides opportunities for this kind of observational assessment. Ideally there will be multiple perspectives on the learner's behaviour from workplace mentors and colleagues, since one tutor cannot constantly observe the learner.

So it seems that some important outcomes of personal development can be observed (and therefore assessed) by tutors, mentors and supervisors. Others are more difficult: learners have the best access to their own feelings of confidence, their sense of motivation and valuing. Consequently we often look to the learner to gather and present through self-report the core evidence for personal development outcomes. Hence the ubiquity of reflective journals, learning logs and portfolios as assessment tools in work-related (or closer-to-life) settings, from the clinical placement to the language student's 'Year Abroad'. Here learners are often expected to recognise their own behaviour and responses to situations and relate these through analysis and commentary to explicit skills and values. It is widely assumed in the literature that the process of writing down a record of an event and its analysis helps learners to build their own understanding of themselves, but for assessment purposes the primary function of the written record is for the tutor to be able to check on the learning that has taken place.

How should self-reported learning be assessed?

Assessing students' reflective writing is still a very live issue despite our accumulating experience across the HE sector. In 2004 the CRA ran a series of workshops called "Supporting Learning from Reflection". Practitioners were brought together with samples of their students' work and shared their judgements with fellow practitioners. A set of criteria were suggested from which they could choose, or they could add their own²⁷. The workshops were structured to help participants reach inductively a clearer understanding of their real purposes in setting reflective writing assignments. As a result it was hoped that they could give clearer, more explicit guidance to their students.

Most participants had little difficulty in selecting the criteria most appropriate to their conception of the task. However, every one of the criteria offered appealed

27 The suggested criteria were: Accurate observation; Analysis of events/situation; Identification of relevant elements of situation; Awareness of own feelings/emotions; Awareness of own attributes/strengths/weaknesses; Awareness of own learning; Making connections between ideas; Making connections with prior knowledge/experience; Honesty/Authenticity; Recognition of/planning for next stage; Commitment to improvement/change

to someone, with more added that we had not thought of. Clearly 'reflective' tasks vary enormously in terms of tutors' expectations and it is often the case that these are not clearly communicated to students. One criterion which caused particular debate was 'authenticity'. Some participants believed that without authenticity reflective writing was worthless, others felt that it was impossible to assess with any degree of reliability. Probably both views are correct.

Through the 'Achieving our Goals' series of workshops already cited the model of PDP as defined in the Progress File Guidelines (see pages 6) was developed. Specifically, the model of PDP which received widespread support from practitioners was as a process of:

- thinking ahead and planning, using both critical rational thinking and imagination;
- doing something and being more aware of what is being done;
- recording these observations and perceptions;
- reviewing/reflecting on actions and their effects;
- evaluating and making judgements about self and the effects of own actions;
- engaging in conversation with a teacher/tutor and/or peers in order to discuss/ challenge experiences, perceptions and judgements;
- using this personal knowledge as a resource to inform future actions.

This is an interesting list because it characterises PDP by some very specific student activities. Reflection is there, but only as an expansion on or alternative means of expressing 'reviewing'. We have as well 'critical rational thinking and imagination', 'being more aware' and 'evaluating and making judgements'. Teachers and tutors may well feel more comfortable with this terminology as a familiar part of their landscape. While they are often unconfident about assessing 'reflection', they are more accustomed to making judgements about the quality of critical thinking and evaluation (although imagination might create more problems).

So have we sorted it?

It does seem that there are grounds for claiming that at least some aspects of students' personal development can be fostered by the environments created by their tutors, including the provision of rich feedback opportunities. Also it seems that this development, to some extent at least, can be 'measured' through different forms of assessment. The real virtue of assessment in whatever form is that it foregrounds and makes explicit for the learner the process of development and the qualities that are developing. This explicit awareness, a key function of the personal development planning process, is vitally important to the learner at transitions: employers have long complained that young people at interview cannot articulate their qualities and cite the evidence from their experience.

Within conventional academic settings, learning environments can be designed for personal development when tutors are clear about the outcomes they are trying to foster. In work-based settings, less easy to structure, learners need to be clear about these outcomes and be able to recognise and monitor their own progress.

A final word concerning mature students. It is sometimes easy for academics to fall into a stereotyped view of mature students as both more intrinsically motivated and more emotionally mature than those coming straight from school. Is there any need therefore to provide personal development planning opportunities to these students? Certainly mature students are likely to have thought harder about their reasons for entering higher education and may have acquired responsibilities which give them a greater experience of multi-tasking and prioritising. Because of this they may be more aware of conflicts of values between the expectations of their programme and their life outside the institution. The process of articulating their personal identity in this new setting needs and deserves support no less than for the school-leaver. Where they bring with them a whole range of qualities - initiative, curiosity, self-discipline, determination - which have already been forged through their life experiences, these should be recognised and celebrated within the academic setting. The ideal setting for this could be within the PDP process.

6. Developing PDP to support employability: an institutional perspective

*Jane Stapleford, Liz Beasley
and Sue Palmer*

The Institutional Context

This initiative is the result of a collaborative effort between a small group of staff from across Leeds Metropolitan University (Leeds Met) meeting to share good practice in PDP and employability.

Leeds Met is one of the largest universities in the country, with over 41,000 students and 3,000 staff. As a former polytechnic, it has a wide range of both vocational and applied academic subjects from para-medical professions through sports sciences, languages, business and the arts. The mission of the University is to be a 'world-class regional university, with world-wide horizons, using all our talents to the full'. There are two contrasting learning environments: the traditional setting of one campus in the world famous sporting area of Headingley and one intertwined with the business, health, civic and entertainment quarters of Leeds.

Developments for PDP have been led at Leeds Met by the Progress Files Working Group sharing good practice in PDP across a wide range of disciplines with a clear philosophy of respecting the diverse perspectives of the academic and professional courses within the university. The Employability Office supports the design and delivery of employability-related activities and career development learning in the curriculum as an integral aspect of PDP.

Our aspiration - for students to recognise the value of PDP and to then carry it forward into their future employment - can be difficult to achieve within the curriculum. More embedded approaches and practices have been adopted in courses such as Nursing, Teacher Education and Social Work, where reflection

and reflective practice is seen as fundamental to personal and professional development. These perhaps align most closely with the 'anticipatory' and 'contextual' approaches identified in Section 1. Some courses, with an identified placement or work-based component, are structured and delivered in a manner that offers opportunities for students to engage directly in personal development and reflective practice, thus emphasising the 'contextual' approach at this point. Youth and Community Work, Hospitality Management and Foundation Degrees such as Early Years Education and Health-related Exercise and Fitness as well as most of the vocational and professionally qualifying courses come into this grouping. Many of these students are mature students actually working within these fields. These course structures provide the framework within which PDP can be linked to the student's experiential learning and development of employability attributes. In many cases, such as health professional courses like Speech and Language Therapy, reflective practice is offered as a method for deepening and applying the learning from the practice experience. Students may be required to keep a journal or learning log of their practice and to relate this to their learning in all aspects of the course. The learning in these courses is an active experiential process where reflection is embedded in the application of solutions to problems as well as in the exploration of new perspectives. Theoretical perspectives can be explored in terms of employability issues and the process is exploratory and critical thinking is developed.

Through the process of PDP our experience suggests that students have developed raised self-awareness, self-confidence and self esteem, and gained an increased understanding of how they can continue to develop skills in the workplace once they complete their study. For example, final year students on BA (Hons) Playwork submit a reflective review of their time on the course²⁸. Many offer examples that provide evidence of personal growth and awareness. The development of employability skills through PDP is a means to evidence lifelong learning and can be used as a tool for lifelong development. A measure of success in PDP would be that the student continues to maintain and develop it as a personalised and valued tool well beyond university life.

As Janet Strivens suggested in the previous section, PDP can be a powerful medium for exploring ethical issues that may arise in workplace contexts. Emotional intelligence is seen as an increasingly evident aspect of employability that students need to develop. For example, students may have to deal with others in team situations and may need to be able to consider the points of view or feelings of others using their capacity for empathy. By using some of the reflective tools such as unsent letters or storytelling, students are supported in developing these skills and in dealing with their own emotions in a rational and thoughtful way.

28 This approach is echoed in the capstone module in Geography described from page 77 onwards.

Apart from the types of courses identified above, the notion of personal development planning and reflective practice as focussed within the mainstream curriculum in any formal sense is a relatively new addition. At Leeds Met such programmes include BSc (Hons) Human Biology, BSc (Hons) Health Studies, BA (Hons) English, and BSc (Hons) Multi-media Technology. In our programmes two significant approaches, in terms of the framework set out in section 4, map onto the 'parallel' and 'embedded in certain modules' approaches. In respect of the former, it is desirable for students to reflect upon the skills they are developing within the course itself, within their work if they are part-time mature students or within the part time work they may well be undertaking to finance their studies (even if it is just pulling pints in the local pub or staffing the tills in Tesco), and within work placements, work-related learning activities within the course or voluntary activities (in our terms, a 'curriculum plus' approach)²⁹. Students can potentially benefit from these work-related activities in the same way as in the professional and vocational courses described above if offered and guided through opportunities for reflective practice.

Developing students' capacity for reflective practice and encouraging them to apply it in a range of different situations enables them to make the link more effectively between learning in their academic discipline and learning in the workplace. Through reflection they may be able to identify and appreciate the value of the employability attributes that they are developing.

If real workplace experience is not available it can be effective to use projects, simulations or case studies embedded within particular modules. Simulations provide opportunities within teaching sessions that can then be the subject of guided or structured activities: for instance, in the BA (Hons) Business Studies students undertake a Business Simulation module. Students can apply conceptual knowledge to the solution of workplace problems to develop a range of employability attributes. Group based presentations or work exercises offer a similar opportunity and can be supported by use of the tools described below. These opportunities can also generate students' insights into their personal values and interests, thus assisting them in planning their careers.

Through a work-related simulation module – as, for example, in the BA (Hons) Media & Popular Culture and the BSc (Hons) Multi-media Technology – students can be encouraged to reflect upon their experience via a journal and to collect and record evidence of the range of employability attributes and experiences. This reflection forms the basis of further career development planning: revisiting the skills audits and the students' CVs, exploring career opportunities, and polishing their skills of writing applications and presenting themselves at interviews appropriate for graduate level employment.

29 See pages 79ff for examples of similarly broadly based practice from other institutions.

Supporting implementation through a ‘toolkit approach’

Addressing these aspects of the curriculum has been a challenge to many HE staff who may not themselves have been trained in PDP. Furthermore they have frequently met resistance from students who “can’t see the point in PDP and reflection” and ‘came to university to study their subject not to waste time on this reflection’. Many seem to find the concept of ‘reflective thinking’ difficult to understand.

An institutional audit of accessible resources carried out by the University’s Employability Office revealed that there was a wealth of both on-line and paper-based material available to both staff and students for developing employability skills and attributes, and for career and personal development in general, but a dearth of material to support learning and teaching in the understanding and development of reflection for personal development.

As a result a small working group was set up, chaired by the Head of the Employability Office, to create resources on reflection and reflective practice for the university intranet which is available both on and off campus. This cross-University group comprised experienced academic staff from the Faculties of Health, Arts and Society, Sport and Education, and the International Faculty, as well as learning support staff.

Subsequently, a variety of tools and exercises have been gathered together and developed in order to provide materials for practising reflection and providing a sound base for students to enhance their skills for PDP. These were developed on the basis of criteria including:

- the need for tools to be accessible for students’ independent use or to be used as part of a blended learning approach
- the need for the tools to be in a format which could be easily incorporated into Web CT-based delivery
- the necessity of complying with the employability and PDP policies at Leeds Met in which delivery and materials can easily be customised for a specific course
- the rather challenging remit of developing materials that are accessible to Level I Foundation Degree students whilst still being stimulating for post-graduate, mature and professional students
- the desire to make the tools meaningful to our international students.

Collectively, these tools form a ‘toolkit’³⁰ – in the form of ‘reusable learning objects’ – that provides a practical set of activities to support the development

30 The term toolkit may have different meanings and convey a range of understandings. We retain it here as the terminology used – and understood by staff and students – within the University.

of skills and techniques that can be used in the process of reflection. There is a clear steer away from encouraging any single approach, and the additional support materials and videos explain how the PDP should reflect the individual and confirm that a model for a PDP is not prescriptive.

The set of 'learning objects' on the reflection site is introduced by one entitled 'What is reflection?' This gives an introduction to the meaning of the term, what is to be learnt, the reasons why we ask students to reflect (see Knight and Yorke, 2004) and some of the theory underpinning reflection and reflective practice. Another 'learning object', the 'Glossary', provides support for understanding some of the educational terminology that can make reflection seem complex or inaccessible. It also allows for links to be made to other 'Skills for Learning' on-line materials so that the process is not seen as 'stand alone', but an integral part of the development of academic and work-related skills.

The 'Toolkit' itself currently contains the following activities for developing the capacity to reflect and for enhancing personal development planning and employability:

- learning journals and diaries
- storytelling
- portraits
- dialogue
- sent letters
- unsent letters
- visualisation
- altered points of view.

In the next section we present four examples to illustrate use of these tools in action.

In order to offer the most flexible blended learning opportunities accessible to the widest possible range of students, both on and off campus, the materials have been developed as 'flexible learning objects' i.e. discrete chunks of learning material provided on-line which can easily be dropped into web-based classrooms. One approach has been to advise students to use the site after introducing the materials at the beginning of the first year, as is being trialled on the BA (Hons) Education Studies course. Currently staff and students involved are engaged in collaborative action research to understand more about the development of reflective practice. Another approach is to provide links to on-line support materials through electronic modules as independent learning activities. This has been particularly worthwhile in the BA (Hons) Early Childhood Education course

where WebCT modules provide direct links to the materials. A cross-faculty Carnegie PDP module is currently being developed in the Carnegie Faculty of Sport and Education that will integrate the 'learning objects' as part of the tutorial structure. The intention is that the use of the learning objects will provide a consistent approach to support where the module is being used across a range of provision.

Moon (2003) stresses that developing a sense of self is an essential aspect of reflection; students at Leeds Met are encouraged to review their use of any of the tools in order to gain insight into themselves. There are many readily available self-audit tools which can be offered to students that provide useful starting points for discussion with students about how they can learn most effectively.

Readily available team roles analysis tools are useful for discussion with groups about the processes required at different stages of a group project. Self and team analysis can be encouraged at an early stage using self-evaluation tools such as Belbin's Team Roles questionnaire which is used in many workplace settings³¹.

A key aim of the development of materials has been to facilitate students' recognition of employability attributes and to support students in making the most of the experiences they have in, and beyond, the classroom in a range of work-related activities

Using a range of tools: the story so far

We launched the three 'Reflection learning objects' at two staff development Employability Learning Lunches, received very positive feedback and assurances that the materials would be extremely useful. During these events the materials were demonstrated and suggestions were sought about how the materials might be used by staff and students across the university. The suggestions varied greatly depending on the nature of the module being delivered and the blend of learning that is adopted. It would seem that the materials can be used in any blend of learning and within most subject areas in a supportive and enhancing way, although there is clearly a need for a creative practitioner to consider additional aspects such as reflective practice and portfolio development.

Each semester we offer a very popular staff development workshop entitled 'Teaching Students to Reflect'. The workshop aims to explore techniques and ideas for staff to support their students with the demands of reflection including the use of the tools described in this section. At a local course team level it has been valuable to hold regular development meetings in order to discuss reflective

31 See www.belbin.info/ (accessed 13 August 2006)

practice and PDP and to produce guidelines and handbooks for a consistent approach along with the 'toolkit'.

A 'Reflection Learning Objects Editorial Forum' was also established with a range of academic staff invited to pilot the materials with their students and to feed back their own and their students' views via an evaluation questionnaire and focus groups. The group included staff from physiotherapy, business (including the MBA), information technology, teacher education and sport. The analysis of questionnaires is not yet complete but interim feedback, through informal encounters and appreciative e-mails, indicates that the materials are accessible, interesting and useful to students at a variety of levels.

Student and staff feedback comments and suggestions include:

'What is reflection?'

"I particularly liked the section on 'structuring your reflection' and the activities provided to stimulate reflective thoughts that may already have been within us without our conscious recognition."

'Reflective Toolkit'

"I think this section is very well put together, user-friendly & relevant; I particularly like the inclusion of 'un-sent letters' as an indication of reflective thinking."

"This is what I have been looking for - thank you!"

"I suggest rather than using the conventional meaning of 'Dialogue' if we adopt David Bohm's idea of dialogue as a thought system and a means of 'generating meaning' it would give us a powerful tool for reflection".

Following the analysis of feedback the development group will re-convene to make appropriate amendments to the site (e.g. to include more student examples like a video diary) and then to plan the next stage i.e. to develop more advanced materials for reflective practice particularly in professional and vocational careers.

The materials have been welcomed widely across the University and are being used in creative and diverse ways. There is a continuing need to capture the good practice through further staff development sessions and to offer suggestions for further use in the future.

Examples from the Toolkit

Learning diaries & journals

Perhaps the most commonly used tool for reflection is the diary. This can be easily misunderstood due to the everyday reference to diaries that students may have kept in the past. Students are encouraged to work towards a form of diary that enables an active learning cycle to take place in an attempt to make sense of experiences. The process is supported by video guidance on the value of a diary and how it might relate to events as well as suggestions for further reading. There is a significant amount of current literature available to guide students towards particular approaches and so there is no need to include any particular template or model; rather what is required is an encouragement to develop a personal style.

Unsent letters

The unsent letter is presented as a tool for exploring emotional conflict or communication issues. Within the toolkit the unsent letter is explored and illustrated with a student letter to a tutor explaining why everything has gone wrong and work has not gone quite as expected. The example also includes a reply that the student has written as if from the tutor where, through empathy, there is a realisation that there is a need to take personal responsibility and control over actions.

The illustration would be familiar to many and allows staff to open up a discussion about personal responsibility and taking control or planning for work with students. It allows for discussion to take place about developing organisational skills and emotional awareness and encourages students to practice the skills through exercises. By expressing emotions through an unsent letter they can become more apparent and be responded to in a controlled manner. This is a skill that is vital in employment as reactions need to be considered and personal responsibility needs to be taken.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a useful tool for exploring complex situations where there are several things happening at once. This is often the case in a work-based experience and students can find it difficult to understand why or how an outcome happened. The example used in the Leeds Met toolkit is a story about confusion caused by lack of effective communication. The story concerns 'Sam' who arrives late for work only to find that the manager of the company has decided to cancel an event that 'Sam' was leading that day, leading to misunderstanding and frustration.

Another story might be about a student team project, where John tells how he seemed to do all the work and others did very little – the issues that would be explored may be related again to communication and the importance of planning as a team and understanding roles. This type of story could be used to explore effective communication and the importance of customer care. This activity encourages students to tell the story from the perspective of someone else so encourages empathy and increased self-awareness as well as supporting group work.

It is important that the student considers actions for improvement as a result of the process. Using this technique in small groups has been particularly effective as it allows for exploration of issues in a community of learning and deepens the process of learning through shared reflection.

Portraits

Examples can be drawn from a number of sources including biography, real and fictional people. Portraits can be used to explore the characteristics of professionals, famous or successful individuals in a given field of work or even an idealised view of a manager, solicitor, web designer or film-maker. Within the toolkit a photograph and description of 'Maxine' is used to encourage the students to understand others in the workplace and consider the attributes of successful people or those that the student would aspire to be. This can promote valuable learning in terms of personal development and potential promotion.

Portraits can be used to prepare for and visualise difficult or complex situations by asking 'How would she/he respond in this situation?' The use of portraits can support a greater understanding of the complexity of roles in the workplace and the importance of personal presentation. Looking at the example with a group would open up discussion about such important employability issues.

Descriptions of how to use these approaches can be found in Brockbank and McGill (1998), McDrury and Alterio (2002), Moon (1999) and Rainer (2004)

Further developments

Students and staff are using these tools in a range of ways across the University and we are evaluating the uses as an on-going process in order to continually enhance the materials. This is an experiential process of development and so far has provided a new way of providing valuable and real materials that are being used in an extensive range of varied provision at all levels. We are interested in exploring the applications and in the impact the materials are having on developing a greater enthusiasm and a reduced resistance to engaging in the process of reflection.

7. Over to practice

Rob Ward and colleagues

Introduction

In the first two sections we offered means of considering different ways of thinking about how PDP practice might be linked to student employability. This was initially done through four ‘broad brush’ approaches and subsequently – if appropriate - with more detailed reference to one of these. The former were:

Starting with **materials**, whether via:

- an ‘**anticipatory**’ approach, through a focus upon PDP-style materials to link with later professional practice;
- a ‘**supportive**’ approach, through the use of employer/CPD resources to legitimise the PDP process and catalyse student engagement with it.

Starting with a ‘**contextual**’ focus, through the use of PDP approaches within locations (such as employer’s premises) which are seen to be rich environments for what we might term ‘direct employability learning’.

Starting with the **rationale**, through emphasising **PDP as a process** that enables students to recognise, record and draw upon evidence for their skills, qualities and capabilities for presentation purposes and to support the development of the processes of self-management that are equally relevant to effective study and employability.

In section 2 Mark Atlay identified six potential relationships between PDP and the curriculum:

- PDP as *an additional* part of the student experience, with students provided with opportunities to engage in PDP, and encouraged to undertake them;
- PDP developed *in parallel* with the curriculum but with some level of integration so that there are explicit links between the two. In this model the PDP element and the curriculum are distinct;
- PDP activities *embedded at certain times* which have a PDP stance and which encourage students to reflect on their progress and development but are not necessarily linked to any one module or unit;
- PDP *embedded in certain modules*. These modules provide the main support for PDP and may serve to link with material studied in other modules;

- PDP *embedded across the curriculum* within a whole curriculum approach where most modules involve activities which are aligned with PDP processes;
- The *curriculum plus* model, where PDP processes are embedded in the curriculum but also serve consciously to integrate activities which occur outside of the curriculum.

Here we both:

1. make use of this thinking as a means of categorising existing practice, and
2. use such practice as a means of testing and developing the categorisation model itself.

Selected vignettes are presented below. Each vignette has been categorised by its authors using the two groups of options presented above as a means of helping readers access practice that may be of relevance to them. Space has not allowed us to present all of the illustrations submitted here, but the complete set of illustrations is available at **www.recordingachievement.org**.

In summary, the conclusions in respect of this section are that:

1. While a spectrum of practice is presented here, most is linked to the curriculum,
2. Given our focus upon 'PDP and Employability' the emphasis on the third – rationale – grouping from section 1 is implicit rather than explicit.
3. Practice is – as we indicated in sections 1 and 2 - more complex and less categorical than our frameworks, with several vignettes reporting a 'blended' approach or approaches. In the case of the York Award, for example:

'The ... Award is both anticipatory and supportive, with respect to the fact that we are trying to encourage students to reflect on their experience with regard to the skills that they will need in later life.

There is a curriculum focus, as we have always encouraged a process that is transferable to a student's academic life, plus they are required to include comment on their degree within the assessment.

With the introduction of PDP at York the focus shifts slightly; with departments taking a lead on PDP discussions and the York Award becoming an additional part of the student experience, existing to recognise outstanding achievement in this area.'

4. In terms of potential relationships between PDP and the curriculum, a range of approaches is evident, most substantively in respect of the 'embedded in certain modules' and 'curriculum plus' approaches.

5. Some practice reflects different emphases at different points in the 'student life cycle'.³²
6. Given the 'personal curriculum' of postgraduate research students, the additional model is the most appropriate to describe such practice, though this does not do justice to the complexity of the Research context. As one respondent indicated:

'Our PDP offering (for Research Students) is difficult to categorise with the framework you've provided, as there is no "curriculum" for ALL research students other than the Joint Skills Statement and the guidance and policy issued by the QAA.

It is principally anticipatory in nature, in that it is not embedded to the curriculum (other than through a Training Needs Analysis that is carried out with the supervisor within one month of registering for the degree). The rationale of the PDP process is to help research students to become complete researchers, and so in many ways they already are IN future employment... So you could also say it was supportive, as it uses the professional framework for the discipline (i.e. academic research)

It certainly isn't contextual but it does have a "curriculum" focus, in that it requires the participants to articulate the skills they develop on a day to day basis, so that they can plan to / and improve these for later use and articulation. In that it is not embedded with supervisory practice, it has to be an ADDITIONAL part of the student experience.'

32 See www.heacademy.ac.uk/4213.htm (accessed 12 August 2006).

AN ADDITIONAL APPROACH: The York Award at the University of York

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

The York Award is a voluntary programme of skills and personal development, which contributes to the University's objective to prepare students exceptionally well to lead successful future lives. Launched in 1998, the planning of the programme predates the outcome of the Dearing inquiry and the subsequent campaign to embed personal development planning within HE practice.

The York Award provides structured training in a variety of work-related skills within a supportive framework for planning and reflection, and provides recognition for doing so in the form of a university certificate. It encourages students to adopt a more holistic view of their learning and personal development, drawing on experience from academic, work-related and social activities.

A programme of short 'courses', supported and self-directed reflection and planning culminate in a final year assessment process, which is both formative and summative.

In the final assessment, students are asked to reflect critically on their experiences both in writing and orally, identifying ways in which their formal and informal learning has prepared them for work and life. The written assessment is modelled on a graduate application form, while the oral assessment takes the form of a ten-minute interview. Assessment involves both academic staff and representative employers and is moderated by the York Award team.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

Feedback indicates that students use the York Award to help them evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and pursue an active programme of personal development. They find the assessment process appropriately challenging and good preparation for presenting their achievements to future employers. Many also find it useful in clarifying their thoughts about career direction.

Longitudinal analysis shows that former York Award participants carry their experience of the programme forward with them into their working lives. For

example, one alumnus reported that: *'I thoroughly enjoyed the York Award and feel it really developed me as a person and an employee.'*

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

It has proved difficult to articulate fully the York Award with related provision in academic departments. The growth in participation in the York Award, together with the implementation of PDP, through the supervisory system, presents an opportunity to complete the integrative process. The challenge will be to ensure that the York Award continues to distinguish students who have genuinely added value to their degree.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

Further details are available at www.york.ac.uk/admin/ssdu/ya/indexya.html

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An ANTICIPATORY APPROACH: Making the most of your work placement – Personal Development Planning to enhance your employability (Brunel University)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

Brunel University has a long tradition of offering students the opportunity to spend time in employment as part of their studies. Placements take place in the 3rd year of a 4 year course. The combination of academic study with periods of practical work experience provides students with an opportunity to develop both academic and work-related skills.

The outline below has been written as guidance for Brunel teachers wishing to run sessions to enable students to make the most of such opportunities. Variations on a PowerPoint presentation ‘How to get the job you want! - Personal Development Planning to enhance your employability’ have been used in sessions with Business School Level 2 students to encourage them to take up and prepare for work placements.

Suggested PDP Activities – Useful Resources

Expectations Setting and Reflection – Give students 2 minutes to list skills and experience that they think employers offering their ideal job or a sample job would expect.

In pairs students interview each other, asking the question: How do your skills and experience make you suitable for this job?

Aspects of employability (adapted from Yorke & Knight, 2004/2006) provides a useful list of skills and definitions to support this activity.

Sample job specification used with Economics and Finance students. For specific examples contact the Placement and Careers Centre

Information Giving – Teacher/work placement officer outlines (possibly using PowerPoint presentation):

- what we mean by employability and the role of the PDP process;
- how work placements add value to the University experience;
- examples of opportunities;
- necessary application details etc.

For access to a web-based PDP system used to support learning development during work placement by Design and Performing Arts students contact Kate Smith. The Placement and Careers Centre may also be able to contribute ideas.

Self-evaluation – Students use the *Employability Skills Record* to identify and evaluate evidence of the skills that they claim to have. Possibly identify one skill that you would like them to complete the *Employability Skills Record* entry for during the taught session – e.g. team work.

The *Employability Skills Record* encourages students to identify, critically examine and plan for further skills development.

A short version of *Employability Skills Record* can be handed out and completed during the session.

The *Identifying Your Skills* tool requires students to identify evidence of skills but not to self-critique this evidence.

Articulating skills and achievements – Having recorded their evidence on paper, students again interview each other, this time asking something like – ‘Give an example of when you worked in a team. What challenges did you face and how did you address them?’

The student in the interviewer role gives feedback on the response then they switch and repeat the interview and feedback process.

Based on this feedback and self-reflection students consider what went well and identify and record aspects of their evidence to improve in the *Employability Skills Record*.

Supporting independent skills development – Tutor presents support and development opportunities offered via the subject area, Brunel Opportunities for Learning Development (BOLD), the Placement and Careers Centre.

Action planning – Based on previous information and that shared in the session, students use the *Employability Skills Record* to identify Action Points. The PDP Action Plan is then used to encourage SMART goal setting and action planning. Students should be reminded to update these as they progress with their job search and placement experience.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

I have run this session 4 times over the last 2 years and each time have made changes to the way I facilitate in order to encourage greater student participation and feedback. For example, recently, rather than asking students to feedback to the whole group, which can result in a limited response, during the paired and small group activities I wander round and talk to them and then feedback insights gleaned from these conversations to the whole group, as well as allowing them to feedback, if they wish to. I like the way the whole session involves students building on their ideas and using the peer feedback generated in the previous activity. I have reduced the amount of handouts and find that having one core document, the Employability Skills Record, which encourages students to switch between recording “evidence of their employability” in written format and articulating their skills verbally, thus mirroring the written and verbal articulation of skills and abilities in the recruitment process, is very well-received. Even those who aren’t convinced at the beginning of the session get drawn into the cyclical process! The main learning outcome for students, based on their feedback, is that the session makes them realise how much effort they still need to put into:

- becoming more aware about what employers are looking for in terms of good quality evidence of the skills they claim to have;
- being able to articulate their skills and experience and provide evidence of them in written format;
- being able to confidently verbalise what they have to offer.

I find that students come to the session at widely differing stages of preparedness. This series of stages which aim to set expectations and take students through the process of articulating the skills and experience in the way employers expect means that all students find a stage that they need to commit time to. Another benefit is that the session offers opportunities to practise and see the value of peer feedback. So, as students have commented, once a session has finished and I have gone students are left with a set of activities which they can easily repeat with a peer, once they have had the chance to reflect upon and develop their employability further.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

I have already worked collaboratively with a Work Placement Officer to team-teach this session and would welcome the opportunity to do this more often and, ideally, hand it over to such staff members so that between us we are able to cover more ground. I have designed the session so that it can be run with approx

200 students in a lecture theatre but ideally would run it with groups of up to 30 students in a flat classroom. Given smaller groups and a longer time frame it would be very beneficial to be able to video students doing the mock interviews and play them back to enhance reflection.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

The materials are all available via the PDP section of the BETAR Centre (Brunel Enhancing Teaching: Advice and Resources) website. This is currently on the (restricted) University intranet but documents could be provided electronically on request.

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AN ANTICIPATORY/ADDITIONAL FOCUS:

Development Needs Analysis – Improving the Employability of Postgraduate Research Students (University of Manchester)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

A key aspect of successful PDP is the ability to self-assess effectively to support reflection. Undergraduates have many formal assessments, comparison with peers engaged in similar activity is easier and in many cases career paths are clear, all helping the reflection process. For research degrees it is harder! Formal assessment is usually on an annual basis, all 'projects' are different, students are isolated and career paths are often less defined. Engineering and Physical Sciences has developed a self-assessment tool for research students that helps address this; The Development Needs Analysis (DNA).

In recent years research degree programmes have targeted the development of the broader range of skills required by employers. In 2001 the Research Councils produced a Joint Skills Statement (JSS) which defined a broad range of skills for PhD students. We have combined the JSS with competence model theory to produce an effective self assessment tool (DNA). For each skill in the JSS a 'Behavioural Indicator' is provided indicating types of behaviour apparent in an experienced research student. The 'Behavioural Indicator' is level three on a four point scale. PhD students need to be at, or reach, level 3. Students now have something more tangible to compare themselves against and self-assess between 1 and 4. After completing the DNA, students discuss the outcome with their supervisors as a moderator, and plan their development.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

The practice provides students with a more realistic view of where they need to be towards the end of their research degree. The DNA is part of an online PDP so can be completed multiple times allowing students to see a progression in their skills development. For practitioners the DNA addresses over- and under-confidence in research students, allowing them to be more realistic about themselves and clearer about the level of skills required by employers. As an online tool it allows the practitioner to gain an excellent overview of the skills in a cohort. We have been able to focus the development of skills training opportunities in direct response to the outcomes of the DNA. The DNA

technique may well have generic application for assessing the skill level in any cohort.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

The next stage in improving practice will be looking at a more sophisticated software package that provides greater linking into supporting resources direct from the DNA.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

The online DNA has secure access: however, details can be found on the UKGRAD database of practice (www.grad.ac.uk) or within the Graduate Resource Book on the EPS Graduate Development Scheme Website (www.eps.manchester.ac.uk/graduateschool/graduatedevelopment/grb.html).

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AN ANTICIPATORY/ADDITIONAL FOCUS:

The Training and Personal Development Planner for Research Students (University of Leeds)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

The PDP file is produced by the Staff and Departmental Development Unit and is given to all new research students during their induction course. (It also links to a PDP we produced for our research staff). The documentation (hard copy chosen deliberately over soft) allows students to conduct a meaningful Training Needs Analysis (with or without their supervisor) and then build on it with a structured PDP process. Supervisors are required by the QAA to conduct a training needs analysis with each student – and these materials allow them to do that effectively. This is linked in to employability via the UK Joint Skills Statement (JSS), and requires that students provide *measurable and demonstrable evidence* for the various transferable and employability skill elements.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

While Leeds has had a PDP file for its researchers for some time, the current incarnation is only in its first iteration (second cycle). Focus groups and interviews have led to improvements. The most useful change we made to the PDP was to give explicit training needs analysis help to the students. This laid a strong foundation for the rest of the process.

What prompts us to keep using it as an optional tool is that feedback collected from students is extremely positive – and it is these same students that we see taking part in other employability-linked events and initiatives. We are tracking usage overtime, and will link usage in with the careers service first-destination statistics and exit interviews.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

Our plan for 2006-7 is to keep what we have and carry out a complete SWOT analysis of the provision. In parallel the University is engaged in building a student portal, and incorporating the Postgraduate Research PDP into this; it ties with the undergraduate provision which is the strategic aim long-term.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

It can be downloaded from: www.leeds.ac.uk/sddu/gts

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AN ANTICIPATORY FOCUS: with PDP embedded in certain modules (University of Leeds)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

When employability is not a key issue, how do you engage medical students and staff with PDP?

An isolated PDP model incorporated within a paper-based Progress File (PF) was singularly unsuccessful in engaging students; employability is not a driver in medicine. PDP was viewed to function outside mainstream teaching and thus was perceived of little real value. An electronic PF was developed, incorporating elements relating to both future professional standards (General Medical Council) and also course materials. Course managers were consulted on course components suitable for inclusion, with variable success, but some courses, notably Personal and Professional Development are now wholly embedded within the PF. This thus provides a single site within which students document their progress, and develop plans for future learning. A key feature of its success is that Phase I medical students have formal annual appraisals, and the PF incorporates all details including preparatory material.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/supporting student employability)?

We started from the premise that a) engagement of staff in the process was integral to students' participation and b) elements were common across different faculties, thus a generic PF model could be developed for use in other disciplines. This PF has been successfully implemented in medicine and geography, and is being rolled out in later years and with other schools.

Students participated in completion of the Progress File when course components required it – this may of course be a feature of 1st year students new to HE. Engagement in a structured form in early HE years may develop a culture of PDP, either against set criteria for employability (as from professional bodies) or from enhanced skill profile.

Whilst not unanimously valued, feedback indicates that a significant proportion of students have found the Progress File useful for evaluating progress and identifying areas for improvement.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

Roll out of PF to later years will still include course components, but formal review of these by staff is less likely and will require self-motivation by the students. We will monitor this!

Staff have engaged with the process to a variable degree, and many are still keen to continue delivering their course components and feedback independent of the Progress File. In that single methods of learning and recording progress do not suit all individuals, this variability will be monitored to consider whether it is detrimental or even beneficial to the whole student body. Staff development remains pertinent.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

The VLE site is being upgraded, and access may be available in future.

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A CONTEXTUAL FOCUS: (with strong elements of anticipatory and then curriculum elements). PDP supporting work and practice-based learning (The University of Ulster)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

The University of Ulster has a strong ethos of both work-based learning and practice-based learning, with students from many backgrounds undertaking external placements in order to develop skills and professionalism that improves employability. PDP is strongly embedded in the preparation for placement, work undertaken on placement and reflection post-placement. Staff guide and facilitate this, directly in class time or by directed work. Staff also visit students on placement and assess reports or portfolios created while on placement. Much of this work uses the university's bespoke PDP implementation tool, the PDSystem, and the integrated Placement Management System to support and assess students concerning their placement.

Before placement, students are encouraged to perform skills audits both to inform them of skill gaps and, if required, to aid the creation of CVs. These audits are student driven, but guided by staff. In some cases students are placed by staff into specific jobs that match their skill gaps, in others, students use CVs in competitive applications for industrial placement.

On placement, students assess their progress by a variety of means depending on their programme. In some cases reports of progress and log books are submitted to staff who assess them in order to guide professional development. On other programmes students formally and continuously review their skills, submitting evidence of improvement in electronic portfolios that are assessed by staff.

After placement, students will be required to reflect upon their placement experience and the effect it has had upon them.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

Students learn how to apply their skills in real situations, and equally, how to acquire new skills and communicate their acquisition. The sharing and assessment of progress while on placement provides an opportunity for academic staff to identify problems early and take remedial action as required.

The practice has encouraged students towards more autonomous and reflective learning, which are essential elements for professional education and continuous professional development.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

We are continuing to improve support facilities and systems that support the diverse practices used in the university, as well as working to disseminate good practice within and outside the university.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

Information about the use of PDP in the University of Ulster can be found at www.ulster.ac.uk/progressfiles/.

The on-line PDSytem that supports much of this activity can be found at <http://pds.ulster.ac.uk>, and the on-line placement system at <http://pms.ulster.ac.uk>.

Please visit those sites for information about demonstration.

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A CONTEXTUAL FOCUS: The Reflective Practitioner: PDP for professional Masters students who study part-time by e-learning for Continuing Professional Development (Sheffield Hallam University)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

PDP is introduced in the first study module, which is designed to ease the transition into Masters level study. Reflective and group activities help students to align their academic, personal and professional goals. At the end of the module they produce a Personal Action Plan (PAP), and complete a module evaluation survey; this encourages reflection on learning as well as providing us with valuable feedback about the student learning experience. PDP is formative and does not carry marks, though students do receive feedback.

All study modules integrate theory and practice, with case studies and work-based assignments; a few include a reflective diary to help students identify their learning and think about how they will apply it to their professional practice.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

All students engage with the activities but not all produce their PAP at the end of the first module, possibly due to time pressures and other assignments taking priority. Possibly bringing the PAP forward would help.

Feedback from students who did engage has been very good. Most found the activities and the reflection process useful; some said they had never been encouraged to reflect in this way before and had learnt new things about themselves.

We believe this introduction to PDP and reflection proved effective for most students, but needs to be continued through the rest of their course.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

Having introduced PDP in the first module, we want to continue the “reflective practitioner” process via PDP. We are incorporating reflective questions in the

evaluation survey at the end of each module. Private blogs within each module Blackboard site might encourage reflective diaries.

We will incorporate PDP activities into the Dissertation preparation process. For our students this is the second important transition point; they have to make important decisions about their project (normally carried out in the workplace). Linking to PDP at this point should help students to reflect on what they have learnt so far, what they want to achieve from the project, how it relates to their professional development etc. Again a reflective diary will be encouraged.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

Not specifically. However more information on this and associated projects can be found on the Sheffield Hallam CETL website at: www.shu.ac.uk/cetl/

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PDP IN PARALLEL WITH THE CURRICULUM: The 'Foundation Direct' Approach to PDP (University of Portsmouth)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

Foundation Direct is a HEFCE funded Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning that builds on the University of Portsmouth's innovative practice developed in student support, career management skills and work-based learning. Foundation Direct is developing a new way to achieve PDP (Professional Development Planning) via a structured and supported process to enable individuals to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and professional career development. The PDP project team consists of practitioners from a variety of departments, thus expertise from across the institution is brought in to inform the development of the unit. The PDP unit is currently being piloted with the FdA Early Years Care and Education with a view to incorporating it into existing foundation degrees, scheduled through a rolling programme from 2005–2007.

PDP will be delivered as a twenty credit unit, consisting of a number of core topics, using a blended learning approach, i.e. combining an online learning environment with traditional face to face tutorial sessions. The online environment will also support and encourage discussion between students at the various locations at which the programme is available. Online core PDP topics will be enhanced by programme-specific resources and existing career management skills materials will be developed to accommodate the professional, employability and work based needs of foundation degree students. These materials will be presented either as generic core topics or they will be "layered": i.e. integrated into other core topics. In addition, there will be materials tailored to specific subject needs and work situations following "Just in Time" principles.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

Upon completion of the PDP unit students will produce a narrative transcript that reflects their professional and academic development to date. The PDP unit will endeavour to meet the different learning and employability needs of foundation degree students who are learning to appreciate the relevance of academic study in relation to workplace practice.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

As the PDP unit is being developed and piloted in the same academic year, an overall review will be conducted to ascertain whether the unit is meeting the needs of foundation degree students. To ensure that materials are appropriate and relevant, interim evaluation will be conducted by a project researcher. Informal feedback is also provided by tutors delivering the PDP materials and moderating the online discussions.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

Currently the materials are not on open access but a promotional demo site is under development. See www.port.ac.uk/foundationdirect_

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PDP EMBEDDED IN CERTAIN MODULES: Practice currently developed for Undergraduate Business Courses at the Business School (The University of Brighton)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

Level one undergraduates study either a single, or in most cases a double, Personal Academic Skills module, both of which are credit bearing, assessed through end of semester coursework assignments, including a literature review, personal SWOT, learning logs, self-assessment and attendance sheets. The modules incorporate the mentoring of year one students by final year students who are taking a 'Managing People' module. Implicit in the module content is provision for personal development planning.

These modules are delivered through a series of interactive workshop sessions with the aim of developing the students' affective abilities and improving employability. They are supported by on-line material collected under the heading **studentprofile**.

The mentoring process forms the basis of the final year student's assignment for the second semester of their 'Managing People' module. The final year student is responsible for mentoring the first year student through a series of meetings in support of their second semester assignment, the 'Job Search Portfolio'. Final year mentors then go on to form self-selected groups in order to set up assessment centres to which their mentees are invited. The mentors expose the mentees to typical assessment centre activities. Thus over the period of their course, the student is given the experience of being both mentor and mentee, and of both attending and running assessment centres

In the second year of their courses business students participate in a credit bearing module Preparation for Employment, which asks the students to identify industrial placement opportunities (if applicable) and to reflect on the progress made in achieving the personal development goals they set at the end of the first year. They are also required to develop an updated Personal Development Plan.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

The students receive direct feedback on a range of key interpersonal skills relevant to employment, teamwork, communication, leadership, organisational

skills, etc from both their tutors and in the form of a written report from their mentor. They also have the opportunity to participate in an assessment centre. Students create and update CVs and practise completing application forms. Students also participate in personal development planning in the context of continuing professional development.

We are directly aware that students obtain employment by either describing the activities outlined above or showing potential employers the work produced.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

The first year programme is subject to constant improvement, e.g. this year we changed a part of the assignment to include a personal SWOT. We are making more use of technology with links to on-line resources including psychometric testing and **studentprofile** for all years. Practice will also be reconsidered during the revalidation progress of all Business degrees which has just commenced.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

The majority of resources are available on our student intranet studentcentral; however they can only be viewed by registered students or staff. Guest access may be possible.

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PDP EMBEDDED IN CERTAIN MODULES: Developing employability throughout a computing-related course using a self-reflective PDP process to support self- and career- management self-efficacy beliefs (London Metropolitan University)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

In this post-1992 University, and in the course in question, employability is embedded in the undergraduate core curriculum through three PDP-supporting modules, one in each of the three years of study:

- In the first year the emphasis of the module is orienting to HE study within the subject context, where with the aid of reflective writing, students review their learning and other achievements, identify strengths and weaknesses, and produce a first draft “personal development action plan”.
- In the second year the PDP-supporting module focuses on raising awareness of professional contexts as well as the skills, subject knowledge, personal attributes and experience needed to operate in a work/professional context. Building on their first year reflective writing analysis students develop a preliminary “career development action plan”.
- In the final year project module students have the opportunity to develop and evidence relevant skills, subject knowledge, and personal attributes which they have identified in the employability module as being important for their career and/or own personal and academic development.

The career service department, and an employer from the IT industry, have inputs into the first and second year respectively, and in the final year project module students work with a real client.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/supporting student employability)?

A key feature of the approach adopted in the first and second year is the use of low-stakes formative assessment for both group and individual assignment elements and, as part of the latter, a student-centred PDP-related assessment which focuses on planning and managing self-development.

Students’ feedback on, and tutors’ impressions of, the assessment process in earlier pilots, indicate that it was effective in enhancing student employability by

focusing on personal development planning for self-development (see references below). Now that the first cohort has gone through the second year of this new scheme (rather than pilots) there is the opportunity for a more systematic analysis of pre- and post-module student self-assessments including career decision-making self-efficacy ratings.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

Better use of blended learning delivery to support the PDP process.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

Two articles on linking pilot work have appeared in the house journal of London Metropolitan University.

Wilson-Medhurst, S. (2005) Using Assessment to Support Employability Awareness and Development. *Investigations in university teaching and learning*, Vol. 3 (1) Autumn, pp.72-79.

Wilson-Medhurst, S. (2005) Supporting Student Development Using Reflective Writing. *Investigations in university teaching and learning*, Vol. 2 (2) Spring, pp.89-92.

These are accessible from the following website:

www.londonmet.ac.uk/capd/in-house-journal-investigations/

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PDP EMBEDDED IN CERTAIN MODULES (Preston College)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

Currently, different models of PDP are delivered on different Foundation Degree programmes. This case study compares two different experiences and highlights the successes and failures of each. Both authors deliver PDP via the Adult, HE and Professional Learning Centre at Preston College. Catherine Elliott delivers PDP as part of an assessed module to Foundation Degree Sports students, whilst Tracey Pratchett delivers PDP to Foundation Degree Engineering students as an add-on to their course.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

FD Sport has a 'Personal Development' module which is assessed formally and incorporates PDP. The subject was taught through a variety of workshops and lecture sessions, and was assessed by a reflective essay and portfolio. Attendance at sessions was good and the students could see the benefit of looking at PDP. As a result of the PDP part of this module, several students are changing jobs in order to ensure that their experience is relevant and are looking at how voluntary work can expand their skills.

The FD Engineering group attend timetabled sessions, where assessment is undertaken informally. A scheme of work was developed incorporating reflection, employability, communication and presentation skills. The sessions are delivered in the Learning Centre via a range of workshops and taught sessions. At the start of the year attendance was good, although one learner disappeared when told that he would be expected to prepare and deliver a presentation! Although it was explained that PDP would enhance their existing learning, students found it difficult to engage with PDP itself.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

Although both classes were delivered in the same environment using similar resources, student responses were very different. By nature, the FD Sport course embeds reflection, whilst the Engineering course does not. This is the first year

that PDP has been integrated into the FD Engineering course unlike the FD Sport students who undertake PDP during an assessed module. The lack of formal assessment for the FD Engineering students meant that they could not see the purpose of attending classes which appeared (to them) to bear no relevance to their chosen studies. Whilst for 2006/7 a formally assessed module will not be included, PDP will continue, but will be formally linked to the assessment for a Work Based Learning module to enhance relevance.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

Currently, resources used for PDP are held in print and electronic formats by the learning centre staff. A course has been installed on the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and will be further developed to provide cross-college access to resources.

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PDP ANTICIPATORY/EMBEDDED IN CERTAIN MODULES: Incorporating PDP into a level 1 business skills module (University of Salford)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

The Business Skills module is undertaken by first year students in their first semester in the University. They are required to work in teams of 5-6 to research and prepare a written report and presentation on a company within an assigned business sector. Students are also required to submit a short position paper which reflects on their experiences. This paper is based on a Personal Development Journal (PDJ) which they complete over the 10 week project period. Members of academic staff provide support on skills-related issues such as use of ICT, group work, presentations and report writing as part of a programme of timetabled tutorials and lectures.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/supporting student employability)?

An evaluation carried out in December 2006 indicates that the project has been a useful way of developing in students some of the generic skills which they will need to succeed in HE and in employment. In particular, students reported that it taught them about how to work effectively as part of a team; how to find information on a company and business sector; how to write minutes and business reports, and that the project had increased their confidence about giving presentations. 41% of students (69 students) agreed or strongly agreed that they found the activities in the PDJ useful but only 29% (49 students) agreed or strongly agreed that the PDJ activities had been interesting to complete.

From a staff perspective, it is evident that students can develop a range of useful generic skills from activity-based learning of this type but can find it difficult to reflect on their experiences. Changes made in 2005/6 which replaced a project log with a requirement to identify and reflect on critical incidents and the production of a reflective position paper have improved the quality of reflection, but more needs to be done to encourage students to identify opportunities for self improvement.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

There is a need to provide students with further support and guidance on reflection and its role in PDP activities.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

The Personal Development Journal used in 2005/6 can be viewed at
www.edu.salford.ac.uk/scd/progfile/staff/pdpppractice/casestudies/b&i/mgmt/index.php

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PDP EMBEDDED IN CERTAIN MODULES: BSc programmes based around Information Systems (University of Salford)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

All students study a compulsory module called “ Team Projects” which allows the students to work in cross-level teams (i.e. students from Levels 1, 2 and 3 all form one team – there are a total of about 25 teams).

The students are given a “live” project in which they must meet the client (usually from a relevant industry) and meet the requirements of the client brief over a period of about 9 months. Each team is then allocated a Team Tutor (a member of academic staff) who then oversees and offers advice and supervision to the team. As part of the assessment, the students undertake presentations and write a substantial Team Report. As part of the report individual students are asked to comment and reflect on the learning experiences they have undergone during this very distinctive module. This “Reflection” experience thus fulfils the Personal Development Planning criteria for all the undergraduates.

Level 1 students are additionally given an “Employability/Skills pack” to work through. This is introduced in the Research Methods/Study Skills-type modules at Induction and is suggested as a way of introducing PDP with the Personal tutor at a first meeting.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/ supporting student employability)?

The practice can be seen to be effective in developing and supporting student employability as the Team Project module in general aims to introduce the student to the “world of work”. Two aspects in particular are of relevance here. First, the pressure of working in a team, against deadlines, is a skill which is appreciated by employers and is useful in management positions. Second, the students who lead the team (there are Team Leaders and Deputy Team Leaders who have to manage the team - and the sometimes conflicting personalities) have to ensure that the tasks are allocated and completed. This has certainly been shown to have a positive impact in later careers, although many students do find this aspect quite daunting initially!

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

Team Tutors are inevitably very busy and time to discuss PDP is sometimes an issue.

Team Tutors also act as Personal Tutors for the students in their allocated Teams. In order to raise the awareness of PDP, a “PDP Week” was organised towards the end of Semester 1. This did have an impact and many students and staff did take the opportunity to discuss PDP related issues. In addition PDP “Master-classes” were offered – although the attendance was disappointing. However, in terms of raising the profile of PDP, the week was successful.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

At the moment these resources are within courses and so are only available to University staff and students. However, for further details, please contact Dr Burke (see below).

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PDP EMBEDDED IN CERTAIN MODULES: PDP and Employability Activities within the Geography Curriculum (University of Worcester)

Describe the practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

Policies developed at UW aim to ensure that all programmes provide structured opportunities for students to engage in these forms of PDP activity within their courses. Geography programmes at Worcester have achieved this by providing a range of PDP and employability activities within a spine of core modules that all Major and Single Honours geography students take. Whilst opportunities to engage in reflective practice exist in other parts of the geography curriculum, such as in key introductory modules, fieldwork and laboratory based modules and work placement options, this spine provides a clear framework for engaging students in PDP and in helping them to think about 'graduateness' and employability.

PDP and employability activities are included in core modules at all three levels of the undergraduate geography programme, each activity building on those of the previous level. In their first year, students are introduced to PDP within their geography skills module 'Practising Geography'. Whilst core skills are being introduced and developed, students are encouraged to reflect on their skills development and to begin charting their skills acquisition within a portfolio. In addition, personnel from the University Careers Service provide an introductory careers session. This involves a general presentation about careers open to geography students, the skills they should be developing on the course, what skills employers are looking for, and other activities they can be engaging in throughout the course to make themselves more employable. This is then followed by a trip to the careers centre, and a quiz to get them to use the materials.

In the second year of study, students develop their PDP skills within their residential field course module to the Scottish Highlands. The emphasis here is on the application of skills acquired in year one to the investigation of 'real world problems' in the field. As part of their assessment for the module, students are asked to write a short reflective piece considering how they have applied skills previously acquired and how their skills portfolio is developing. Personnel from the University Careers Service provide further sessions reflecting on skills and how these link to the job market. Students look at job vacancies to see what transferable skills employers are looking for. Students then make action plans addressing how they can work towards employment, e.g. specific skills development, work experience etc.

In their final year, all Major or Single Honours geography students take a 'capstone' module 'Applying Geography'. This module is designed to enable students to reflect on their undergraduate geography career, with tutors and their peers, and to consider the range of the knowledge, skills and competencies they have acquired and the usefulness of these to their future in the world beyond their university degree course. The module develops students' independence in reflection and planning. Whilst tutors provide a broad framework for the module, much of the discussion, and the topic focus for the assessment tasks, are shaped by the reflective input from students. Part of the assessment for the module takes the form of a 'mock' job interview. Students choose a career, prepare their curriculum vitae and then undertake a short 'interview' for the post, which asks about the nature of the post, the skills and knowledge they bring with them to the job and how they would apply this knowledge. The interview is led by two tutors from the geography team. Preparation for this assignment is facilitated by in-class discussion with tutors and former students and by a specific careers session, organised by the Careers Service, which focuses on a full review of skills acquired and how students can present themselves in a curriculum vitae and at interview.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/supporting student employability)?

Feedback from students on the 'capstone' module has been extremely positive. Equally, students have engaged enthusiastically with the assignments and frequently achieve higher grades than for assignments in their other modules. Students welcome the opportunity to look back on their geography programme and to 'make sense of' what they have undertaken and achieved. It provides an important confidence boost for students, in helping them to recognise the high-order skills that they possess, and to demonstrate the desirability of these skills within a wider context. Students find it particularly useful as they are often in the process of applying for jobs at the time the module is running. Student enthusiasm for the module has also been demonstrated by the support provided by former geography students in giving up time to come back and talk to current students about the work they are now doing, to offer their thoughts on what the process of PDP meant to them and to highlight how it has been useful to them in their careers. This has been particularly valuable in demonstrating the benefits of the process of PDP to current students. These reflective sessions have also been useful for staff tutoring the module, enabling them to reflect on their own teaching and research in discussion with students, frequently prompting further curriculum and research developments.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

The capstone module, and the wider PDP structure within the UW geography programme, has demonstrated the benefits of engaging in PDP in the curriculum. Future development of the geography PDP programme will include enhancement of student opportunities at the beginning and end of their undergraduate course. At the beginning of the course this might include further activities and guidance at the pre-entry and induction level, and for the capstone module increasing the pool of geography alumni who can contribute their experience to the module. Also, there is also a need to link this spine of PDP activity more firmly to other parts of the geography course, in order to further develop PDP activities throughout the curriculum. Finally, there is a need to review these PDP and employability activities with regard to the developing student enterprise agenda within higher education.

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A 'CURRICULUM PLUS' APPROACH: Embedding PDP and employability into modular degree programmes (Edge Hill University)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

Although a “one size fits all” approach was inappropriate for the modular degree programme, each department appointed a champion to move PDP and employability forward and embed it into the curriculum. It was decided that all PDPs should include as a minimum entitlement: level 1 - skills auditing, skills development and academic literacy, numeracy and ITC; at level 2 – CV development, career planning and work/volunteering opportunities/research; at level 3 – employment research, entrepreneurship, CV enhancement. PDP is delivered through the medium of subject-specific materials so that students can see the relevance of it to their future career.

Some departments have developed PDP modules as an accredited part of the programme; others have embedded it into every module. Central services such as learning services and careers and employers are involved in planning, delivery and assessment of PDP but in the main PDP is delivered by personal tutors during timetabled sessions and is closely allied to student support and guidance.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/supporting student employability)?

Until PDP became an accredited and integral part of the personal tutorial system, staff and students did not fully engage with it. Now both staff and students can see the value of such a system and student evaluations suggest that both academic and employability skills have been made more transparent. Employer engagement in planning and delivery has added value in departments where this has been implemented.

In addition all students will be offered the opportunity to gain work or volunteering experience. This plus the PDP will then be certificated as 'A Certificate of Working Knowledge'

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

One department validated six new degrees two years ago. All programmes have a common first year with specialist routes in year two and three. All year one students have a PDP module and three of these programmes have specific PDP modules in year 2 and 3 whilst the other three have PDP embedded into some of the modules. An evaluation will be carried out at the end of years two and three in order to ascertain which students are more aware of their employability and other transferable skills. This evaluation will then be used to influence future development of PDP and employability across the whole range of modular provision.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

At the moment PDPs are, in the main, paper-based therefore are not easily accessible, but the aim is to develop e-portfolios by September 2006 which will make them easier to access. Some resources are available from the address below.

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A 'CURRICULUM PLUS' APPROACH: The University of Chester Communication Studies Programme: Employer File

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

Students develop a portfolio (called the Employer File) which is assessed each semester and linked to the skills modules taught at all three levels. The File will be shown to future/ potential employers as evidence of the skills students have developed in relation to the communication industry. The files are assessed against criteria which include the skills evidencing, but also assess reflection and evaluation, and include compulsory formative and self-assessment sections completed by the student. At the end of the final year the File includes all previously assessed work if the students wish to showcase it. The File is highly individual, and students can play to their strengths, making this a successful form of assessment in diverse teaching groups and in keeping with retention and progression targets.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/supporting student employability)?

We conduct research each year at each level tracking understanding and awareness of this form of assessment. In the third year, this research is linked directly to employability and whether the students have already used or anticipate using it in the job search as such, and/or whether the skills which have developed as a result of doing the File, have increased levels of confidence etc. Subsequently, students contact us after graduation, and in many cases tell us that the File was crucial in the interview process.

The File is regularly singled out as best practice by external examiners.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

We are constantly re-evaluating all elements of the File. This year, as part of her File, a final student has conducted research among the other two levels and will provide those findings to the teaching team, for development and implementation as required. In addition, a new degree is being developed to be delivered at our Warrington campus, which is likely to include the File as a key component of the assessment, but tailored to meet the needs of a different subject area and student

profile. One of our former students is on the planning team for this.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

At the moment, material is available only to the students registered for the skills modules. These include question and answer sheets about the File, packs of exercises for use in the File, and the formative and self-assessment sheets. The course team works closely with other areas of the University such as the Careers Service, Student Guidance and Support, and Work-Based Learning where there is a synergy with this form of employment -geared reflective work. The aim is to include it in the University's Shared Practice Database.

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A 'CURRICULUM PLUS' APPROACH: Embedding PDP in the Postgraduate Urban and Regional Planning Curriculum (Heriot Watt University)

The practice (what do staff do, what do students do, are others involved – and how)?

Induction: At the half-day induction before classes start, the postgraduate programme co-ordinator introduces the concept of PDP to multi-disciplinary students within the programme, promotes its usefulness, and hands out the standard PDP template developed by the School. The first part of this includes open questions about why a student has chosen to come on the course and what they hope to achieve, including career aspirations. The students fill in the open questions, which are collected in and read by the course leaders to help them get to know the students. By the end of induction, students have therefore started their PDPs and are encouraged to keep them up-to-date throughout the course.

Modules: There are certain modules throughout the course in which PDP is highlighted, building on the introduction at induction. These include a first term module on the nature of planning and qualities expected of planners and specialist options in second term.

Planning Management module: PDP is the assessment method for a third term module, Planning Management. This is the main module that includes professional and career issues, consolidating learning at the end of the year as students are thinking about applying for jobs. Students are given a wide range of options for completing their PDP, including the standard skills/knowledge/values matrix, mind maps, SWOT analysis, 'medicine wheel', Sigmoid Curve (see Charles Handy, 1995, *The Empty Raincoat: Making Sense of the Future*, Random House), and collage/graphic representation. These are explained in class and students are also invited to think of any other ways of completing the PDP, thereby encouraging creative thinking and recognising that different students have different learning styles. The brief and assessment criteria are clearly spelled out.

The PDPs encourage students to see themselves as whole persons, integrating work experience, transferable and technical skills and outside activities. Students also peer-assess each other's PDP one week in advance of the hand-in date, to suggest improvements and further promote learning.

This particular group of students includes many part-time mature students who have been working for some time. The great majority of these mature students take the opportunity to use PDPs effectively to assess where they have come from and where they are going in career, and sometimes, more personal terms. For many, it comes at a turning point in their lives that a university degree

represents. It is fair to say that some of the most creative forms of PDP have come from this group. However, as with younger students, there is a small percentage that doesn't take advantage of what PDP offers. The only two fails have been in mature students who handed in something too brief and ill thought-out when compared to the assessment criteria to merit a pass.

What did you learn from it; what did the students learn from it (what prompts you to see the practice as effective in developing/supporting student employability)?

Student feedback was very positive, even from those who admitted they were sceptical at the beginning. Students found the PDPs helped them reflect about and plan their learning, prepare for job applications and interviews and develop skills required by the Royal Town Planning Institute (who require PDPs for initial membership and continuous professional development). It was clear that different forms of PDP appealed to different students and many were extremely creative. Students were happy for the plans to be assessed. Staff also said that the PDPs helped them get to know students; many were truly "inspiring" and when read across the cohort, gave useful pointers about curriculum development.

How might/are you planning to develop/improve practice?

PDP has been an assessed part of this course for several years and a detailed student evaluation is analysed every year to guide changes in subsequent years. The introduction of more creative forms of PDP occurred recently, inspired by participation in the Creative University Project (see C. Baillie, ed, 2004, *The Travelling CASE: How to Foster Creativity through Creative Thinking. Guide for HE teachers*. UK Centre for Materials Education, Learning and Teaching Support Network). It is hoped that the success of this approach can be rolled out across the School more widely.

Can the resources/approach be viewed by others? Where/how?

See the Centre for Education in the Built Environment website for more details, including templates for using these techniques:

www.cebe.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/edg/edg04/higgins.php

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8. Getting students to take PDP seriously

The original Guidelines for PDP,³³ in highlighting effective and successful practice, provided a number of pointers to supporting student engagement with PDP. These emphasised the importance of:

- PDP as an **academic** activity, linked to the learning objectives/outcomes of programmes, thereby helping to locate it with the primary purpose(s) of university study;
- introducing students to PDP, its purposes, obligations and anticipated benefits, at an early point in their HE experience;
- staff themselves valuing the approach, by being involved in similar processes, e.g. *through appraisal and development policies or portfolio building linked to professional accreditation or CPD requirements*;
- involving students in the design and development of documents and processes where applicable;
- ensuring that students have appropriate and regular access to a named individual who will support (and challenge) them through the PDP process;
- ensuring that PDP is integrated into the opportunities that are provided for careers advice and planning;
- gaining feedback from students on the effectiveness of their PDP practices and involving them in any formal review of policy.

Project work, for example at the University of Leeds (Butcher et al 2000) also provides pointers to key factors in student involvement. Student comments here generally broke down into three groups.

1. Students who were starting to make use of the document **strategically**: 'I use it to establish myself as a student and to compare what I am now to what I was six months ago'. 'I have been able to see where I have been and where I am going, with more clarity'. 'I didn't really think it was much use at first, but after 18 months I can see that the notes we made at the end of the first exams were useful'. 'I was surprised, it seemed to be a waste of time at first, but I now realise what a help doing some planning can be'. 'Recording helped me realise what I have learnt this year'.
2. Those who recognised the **positive potential** of the approach 'If I took time

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At www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/guidelines/progfile2001.asp

to read the Portfolio, I am sure I would find it very valuable in aiming for the future'. 'It reminds you what you should be doing.' 'Maybe I would use it at the end of the year to reflect upon the whole year's work'. 'I know I should be using it more, I am not good at this sort of thing, so having to do it for my tutor would be useful '.

3. Those who were **dismissive of the recording process** in particular ' I assess what I am doing myself; I don't need a book to help me'. 'I don't need to write down experiences and achievements, I think I can remember'. 'It's too early to plan ahead; I don't know what I am doing next week '.

There was, however, an important caveat which emerged in both written and focus group comments, and which reinforces the centrality of staff engagement referred to in the Progress File Guidelines: ' I think (this type of) support is good, but talking to someone on a regular basis is better and more productive than writing it down' (Butcher et al. 2000). Related to this, where the process was linked to tutorial provision, the response of the tutor was a significant 'driver' (or non-response a significant 'inhibitor') in relation to student engagement. Without this, the production of policy statements and investment in materials may provide a limited return.

More recently, as part of a National Teaching Fellowship, John Peters asked a sample of students from six institutions (two pre '92, two post '92 and two colleges sector institutions) to complete an open-ended questionnaire about their experience of PDP. Initial analysis of the outcomes from this work indicates that:

- almost half (47%) suggested they were engaged with PDP for purely intrinsic reasons, while less than one fifth (17%) reported involvement for purely extrinsic reasons
- written data provided clear evidence of the complexity of student attitudes. Some gave moving statements of the value of PDP to their lives; others rejected the whole concept as 'useless paperwork'. There were clear relationships between seeing PDP as a process to be engaged with or as a bureaucratic tool to be avoided
- those who valued PDP variously described it as being about personal growth, development as a learner, self-assessment, the development of skills, or underpinning professional practice. While some acknowledged that they only engaged with PDP because it was a requirement of their programme of study, many amongst these stated they had nonetheless found it useful
- those who engaged in PDP were more likely to cite its value to them or to claim it as a natural personal attribute; 'PDP for me is a way of life'. Those who did not engage were much more likely to blame their environment - lack of information, lack of support, lack of time, over-complex systems. Elsewhere, others have cited "I didn't know what to write" as the single biggest problem, closely followed by "I didn't know how much to write"

- just as before, staff and students recognised that the value placed on PDP by subject staff influenced student engagement
- time constraints were seen by both groups as the most important perceived barrier to engagement.

To get students to take PDP practice seriously these findings suggest that we need to:

- connect PDP practice to core academic activity (a point which is helpfully congruent with the ESECT stress on connecting good learning and employability)
- recognise the value of presenting PDP to students as a process looking forward to what they will be undertaking in employment rather than looking back to what they did in school (and hoped they'd never have to do again). Negative comments along the lines of "I don't need to be monitored, I'm an adult" are not uncommon (and staff comments reflect this too). So stressing appraisal/performance review/professional development processes in business and industry can be helpful
- provide 'models' for getting started, and a much stronger framing of the task initially, at least until it feels familiar
- emphasise the process of PDP rather than the bureaucracy
- encourage students to consider the benefits of engagement with PDP for them (and recognise that, in the context of a diverse student population, these could themselves be diverse)
- support staff in ensuring that they understand the benefits of engagement for students (and indeed for staff themselves³⁴). In several evaluations the primary complaint from students is about their Personal Tutor being unknown/uncontactable/not interested rather than anything to do with the system (whether electronic or paper).

These points of course, are not mutually exclusive, and will in all probability never be achieved with all students – or all staff. The evidence from the illustrations presented in the previous section is, however, that it can be done!

34 Both for their own professional development and in terms of the development of more self-directed and self managed learners. See also Young D.R. (2005) Personal Development Planning and Employability: survey of Current Practice and Issues. Report for the Joint SACCA/US Working Group on Implementing PDP in Scotland (ELF Project), para. 2.8.

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10. Biographies

Rob Ward

Rob Ward is the Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement, a national network organisation, registered educational charity, and Associate Centre of the Higher Education Academy. With over fifty HE members, the CRA provides a unique national cross sectoral network committed to maximising the benefits of personal development planning and related processes for individuals and the organisations to which they belong. A 'lapsed historian', he previously worked as a Careers Adviser, a Senior Lecturer on In-service Training Programmes in Careers Education and Guidance and a Curriculum Adviser within Health Care programmes in HE.

Mark Atlay

Mark Atlay is Director of the University of Bedfordshire's Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning which focuses on employability and PDP (see www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl). Mark spent seven years lecturing in chemistry at the University of Glamorgan before moving on to work on the development of distance learning materials at the Open University in the UK. At the University, he has worked in a number of areas including Quality Assurance, Staff Development, Quality Enhancement and Educational Development. He has coordinated the development and implementation of the University's curriculum model involving a revised approach to skills development linked to Progress Files and personal development planning (PDP). He has also led a HEFCE Good Management Practice project (GMP201) on effecting change in Higher Education.

Janet Strivens

Janet Strivens has taught in various universities in the UK for over thirty years and is a Registered Practitioner of the Higher Education Academy. She is the Senior Associate Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement and is also an Educational Developer at the University of Liverpool. She was a member of the team which developed the Liverpool University Student Interactive Database (LUSID), one of the first electronic tools to support personal development planning. Since then she has been involved in a number of JISC projects, most recently two of the distributed e-learning (DEL) projects in the North West. Her particular interests are in personal development planning, e-portfolio use and electronic support for PDP, assessment for learning and the development of autonomy in learning.

Jane Stapleford

Jane Stapleford, a chartered occupational psychologist, heads the Employability Office at Leeds Metropolitan University and has led the strategic development and implementation of employability and PDP in the curriculum across the university. She is chair of the University Progress Files Group and Reflective Practice Working Group, facilitates extensive staff development for PDP and creates on-line resources for employability, personal and career development. A member of the Careers Education Benchmark Steering Group and AGCAS Careers Education Task Group, she contributes to national and international conferences on integrating employability, PDP and work-related learning in the HE curriculum.

Liz Beasley

Liz Beasley is the Academic and Educational Developer in the Carnegie Faculty of Sport and Education within Leeds Metropolitan University. Liz has 20 years experience in teaching across primary schools, initial teacher training, CPD for teachers and trainers as well as a wide range of staff development within HE. Reflective practice is a central core element of all teaching approaches adopted and a personal and professional enthusiasm has been influential in developments within and beyond the university, most recently at a conference in South Africa in a joint presentation with Jane Stapleford.

Sue Palmer

Sue Palmer is Associate Dean in the Faculty of Arts & Society at Leeds Metropolitan University. Her interest in reflective practice developed from her work with children in playwork settings and on the Playwork degree and as part of the PDP group within the university. Her publications include *Playwork as reflective practice* in Brown (2003) *Playwork theory & practice*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

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