

Using the Personal Development Planning Evaluation Guides and Tools

Attached are:

1. two evaluation guides;
2. a small collection of examples of evaluation tools that have been used by Personal Development Planning [PDP] practitioners;
3. a simple template for recording your evaluation activities.

The authors would urge that you read at least one of the guides before reaching for the tools even if only to provide a reminder of the key issues in designing an effective evaluation.

The two different guides emerged, in part, by accident. Two evaluator-practitioners were asked to contribute to the guide and, due to different disciplinary background and evaluation experience produced rather different materials. Rather than seeking to produce a compromise, we decided to give you the option of using either or both guides. Both guides provide evaluation guidance, digests of the key questions and references for further reading but they also have a number of complimentary foci:

David Baume's '[Guide for evaluating PDP ventures](#)' is informed by extensive experience as an evaluator of higher education projects and therefore focuses particularly on the evaluation of PDP projects. This means the guide provides particularly helpful detail on how to define project goals, gather baseline data and monitor and evaluate effectively against your project plan. Even if you do not conceive of your PDP implementation work as a project his advice on defining and clarifying the intentions and milestones of PDP work is fundamentally important to successful evaluation.

John Peters' '[Guide and toolkit for evaluating PDP](#)' begins with the premise that many PDP practitioners are carrying-out 'real world catch-up' evaluation. That is, they are already implementing PDP as a long-term development but are only now beginning to consider more robust evaluation of that practice. The guide therefore offers a full introduction to evaluation, starting by looking particularly at the purposes of evaluation and audiences for evaluation before working through to techniques of evaluation and reporting.

The [tools](#) included here are offered as examples not exemplars. They have all been used in practice by PDP practitioners. We will be looking to add many more case studies of evaluations and the tools they used in future.

Finally we want to see the toolkit as a developing resource. So please make use of the [Evaluation template](#) to document your approach and results and return it to us at CRA for inclusion on the CRA website.

To access the appropriate guide, please click on the hot links in the text above.

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A Guide for evaluating PDP ventures

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Introduction and overview

This tool is written for a team planning and running any venture associated with personal development planning (PDP).

This PDP venture might be, for example, a policy, a strategy, an initiative, a project, an event, a programme, a course, a module, a resource, a piece of technology... The tool works for parts of a venture as well as for the venture as whole.

(The approach offered in this tool would also help you to evaluate a venture to do many other things. But we concentrate here on PDP ventures.)

There are at least four main reasons¹ to monitor and evaluate a venture:

1. To account for resources committed and outcomes attained
2. To understand why the venture is having the effects that it is having
3. To improve this and future such ventures
4. To develop the capacity of the venture to monitor and evaluate its own practice.

The tool suggests, and will help you to undertake, three vital evaluation activities:

1. At the start, setting and clarifying goals
2. All the way through, monitoring and improving
3. At the end (and perhaps at fixed points, say annually, during a long venture), evaluation

The tool offers productive questions to answer at each stage. These questions are reproduced at the end for you to adapt and use as a worksheet for your venture.

But questions are not enough. Where appropriate and necessary, we also suggest criteria for good answers to these questions. (Where the criteria for a good answer are obvious, we don't.)

The list of steps below may look rather long. Some steps can be accomplished quickly, in a few minutes. Further, for a small venture, you can select and use a subset of these steps. For example if your project is to work directly with teaching staff on ways to train students to use PDP, then you won't need steps 5 and 6, which are concerned with intermediate outcomes and audiences. And if this is the first use of PDP, then there will be no baseline data to collect (step 7).

The tool suggests that you, roughly in this sequence with some necessary iteration:

1. Identify what exactly it is that you want to evaluate.
2. Identify the main stakeholders in the venture and their needs.
3. Define the intended ultimate outcomes for your venture; the particular effects that your venture is intended to achieve, the particular differences that your venture is intended to make.
4. Identify the ultimate people and organisations or groups through whom your venture will achieve these outcomes.
5. Identify any intermediate people and organisations or groups through whom your venture will work to achieve these outcomes.

¹ A similar account of the first three is given by Chelimsky (1997)

6. Determine intermediate outcomes or milestones, for each stage of the venture and for each intermediate audience for the venture.
7. Determine the current situation, the baseline data for whatever it is that you want to change.
8. Select or devise ways to monitor (during the venture) and then evaluate (at the end) to what extent each of these intermediate and then ultimate outcomes has been achieved, and how and why.
9. If it proves difficult to find a way to monitor or evaluate any of your intended outcomes, review the outcomes until you can see a good way to monitor and evaluate their attainment.
10. If it still proves difficult to find a way to monitor or evaluate any of your intended outcomes, find the most plausible and appropriate proxy measures you can for the outcomes whose attainment you can't measure directly or within the necessary timescale.
11. Report.

This tool also acknowledges some of the limits to evaluation. We cannot always trace with certainty the consequences of our actions. That does not mean that evaluation is impossible; merely that it can be difficult.

In brief, the tool advises:

1. Maximum possible clarity about the objects of the evaluation, the stakeholders and the intended outcomes
2. Systematic collection, first of baseline data and then of outcomes-related data during the venture
3. Openness to surprises; and
4. Using proxies for project outcomes where necessary.

This tool uses a sustained example, about strategy for the use of PDP in work-related learning. We hope you will find or construct, and then use, your own example to explore how you could use this tool.

Many of the activities suggested in this tool are the ordinary everyday stuff of organisational change, undertaken perhaps a little more systematically. We characterise the approach to evaluation described here as outcomes-based and at the same time eclectic. The OB,E methodology, perhaps.

Now, a more detailed consideration of each step of the process.

1 What are you evaluating?

This isn't always as obvious as it sounds. For example, are you evaluating:

- PDP documentation?
- An e-portfolio or e-PDP system?
- A PDP system with particular reference to – Students planning? Students reviewing their progress? Students documenting their progress? Some other student activities and learning?
- PDP policy and strategy – at University level? Department level? Course level?
- The implementation of PDP policy and strategy – again at which of these levels?
- The University PDP Unit?
- Other things?
- Several of the above?

1.1 What exactly are you evaluating?

A good answer will, obviously, be both complete and accurate. But you may not be able to decide exactly everything that you are evaluating at the start of the venture. So, return to this question during the project. You may add things to your list, or subtract things from it, or rearrange it, as the venture and your mental model of it changes.

2 Who are the stakeholders? What do they want?

'Who are the stakeholders?' is considered with great clarity and thoroughness in John Peters' "PDP Evaluation Guide and Toolkit". I shall not repeat here what he says.

We said in 1 above that you will not necessarily be able to identify every single object to be evaluated at the start of the project. The same applies also applies to stakeholders and their needs and questions. So, identify as many of the main stakeholders and their needs as you can at the start.

Then let the list grow, shrink or simply change as time passes.

The questions here take a different form. 'Who are the stakeholders?' should be reasonably clear. The best way to identify what they want from the project, their evaluation questions, and their criteria for a satisfactory answer to their evaluation questions is simply to ask them. As suggested below:

2.1 Who are the stakeholders?	2.2 What do stakeholders want from the venture?	2.3 What are their evaluation questions?	2.4 What are their criteria for a satisfactory answer to their evaluation questions?
Example:			
Students	"Something to show to employers that will increase my chance of getting a good job with them."	"Will my PDP give me something to show to employers that will increase my chance of getting a good job with them?"	The answer should be "Yes, and here's how it will work, and here's evidence (from other students) that it does work."
<p>Criteria for satisfactory answers:</p> <p>No glaring omissions or superfluties. (The list of stakeholders may well change over time.)</p> <p>The stakeholders accept your accounts of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What they want from the project • Their evaluation questions, and • Their criteria for a satisfactory answer to their evaluation questions. 			

The student example is intended to show that what may sound a rather complex process needn't be. Although it may sometimes be a little more complex than this.

3 Overall purposes

It is much easier to monitor and evaluate a venture when its purposes are clear and explicit. So:

3.1 What do you intend your venture to achieve?

A good answer to this question will describe purposes that are exciting, attractive, and to some extent at least measurable, certainly noticeable and describable.

If the venture is about more than PDP, then the purposes of the venture will be correspondingly broader. But the contribution of PDP to the broader purpose should be clear and explicit.

For example: You might want your venture to increase the number of programmes in your HEI that make effective use of PDP for work-related learning, as part of a broader institution-wide initiative on work-related learning, perhaps with a view to enhancing student employability.

This is a clear start. It needs further specification, to give a basis for planning, then later for monitoring and for evaluation. You can achieve this further specification by answering:

3.2 What, specifically, is this venture intended to achieve with respect to use of PDP?

Or, putting this in slightly different ways,

3.3 What particular difference(s) is this venture intended to make with respect to the use of PDP?

Or again

3.4 How will PDP contribute to the wider goals of the venture?

Again, good answers to these questions are exciting, attractive, measurable, certainly noticeable and describable.

For example, and as just one out of many possible achievements towards the overall goal expressed above: You might want to change your institution's Learning and Teaching Strategy to say that, by 2008, every programme will support students to undertake some work-related learning.

Further, you may want the contribution of PDP to the wider work-related learning venture to be explicit. For example you may want the use of PDP to help students to prepare for, make productive use of, extract valued (and accredited) academic and professional learning from, and also enjoy, their work-related learning.

Check on Step 3

Imagine that the venture is over. Each of the particular intended achievements or differences has been accomplished, each of the deliverables delivered.

Would you feel that the overall outcome of the project – expressed in your answer to question 3.1. above – had been achieved?

If not, adjust the overall goal, your answers to questions 3.2 - 3.4, until the answer is yes.

You may be impatient to get on with the venture. Time spent clarifying the goals will greatly reduce the chance of your going off track, and wasting lots of time, later.

You should also refer to Section 9, on the evaluability of outcomes, at this stage. Check that you know how to evaluate the attainment of the overall outcome you have written. If you can't see how to evaluate its attainment, we suggest that you revise it until you can.

4 Ultimate audiences²

The ultimate audiences are the people whose actions will finally determine the success of the venture. Often, in PDP work, it will be the students, or the staff or employers who work directly with them.

4.1 To whom is the venture intended to make this difference?

Continuing the previous example: You would need to work through appropriate committees and through senior staff to change the Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy, to give priority to work-related learning (if not already included) and certainly to make explicit the use of PDP to support work-related learning. This need not be a whole new section of the Strategy – you may only need to get a sentence or two added.

Section 5 below considers some of the intermediates through whom you may need to work.

5 Intermediate audiences

Your venture may not directly reach those it is finally intended to affect. You may need to ask:

5.1 Through whom, through which people and groups, will you need to work to achieve the ultimate purposes of this venture?

The answer to this question does not need to comprise an exhaustive analysis of all the possible chains and networks of communication and influence across the University. You simply need to identify a few key players. As discussed previously, as the venture progresses, and as you learn more, your list will change.

Continuing with the example: Committees and senior staff may need persuading of the role of PDP in supporting work-related learning. How could this be achieved? A groundswell of positive opinions, evidence of the effectiveness of work-related learning supported by PDP, and clear links to any current policy and strategy; these can all be effective, especially when they act together. So you might decide to start by working with course and programme teams who are already using work-related learning; perhaps in some of the ways suggested in 6 below.

² 'Audience' is not the right word – it can imply passivity, which is wrong for people who we want to choose to do things! 'Client' often means the funder rather than the user. We have previously used 'stakeholder' in a much broader sense. Reluctantly, we stick with 'audience'.

6 Intermediate outcomes

When you need to work through other people, you should ask and answer:

6.1 What particular differences will this venture need to make to each of these people or groups?

Or

6.2 What do we need each of these people or groups to do if the overall goal is to be achieved?

As with your intermediate audiences, your list of intermediate outcomes will evolve as you go.

Continuing with the example: You might work with individuals and course teams who are already using PDP to support work-related learning. You might want to encourage or support them to research and review and disseminate factors affecting the successful adoption of work-related learning and its success in developing student employability. You would want them to study the role of PDP in this. This work could establish a solid foundation, of data and of informed enthusiasts, before you and colleagues start to seek to influence institutional policy and strategy...

Longer ventures will have intermediate outcomes in a different sense; reporting points, review points, mini-evaluations to take stock of progress to date and see what changes, to methods and perhaps also to some outcomes, are needed.

Check on steps 3, 4, 5 & 6

You need to be sure that your overall and intermediate outcomes and your overall and intermediate audiences are consistent with each other.

If this venture led to these intermediate outcomes being achieved by these intermediate audiences, would this be likely to mean that the overall outcomes of the venture would in due course be achieved?

Again, if not, adjust the overall goal, or your answers to the questions 4, 5 and 6, until the answer is at least a reasonably confident 'yes'.

Remember, though, that none of this is an exact science. A well-thought-through outline plan is useful. Beyond that, you will progress faster and learn more by trying things and seeing what happens, and fine-tuning (and sometimes indeed coarse-tuning) as you go.

In the example we have been using: There may be a missing stage. You may also need to work, from the beginning, with programmes not currently using work-related learning; to identify why not, to identify possible benefits for these programmes in work-related learning, and to develop ways to engage them in the venture.

7 Baseline data

It is much easier to show that your venture has made a difference if you know how things were at the start. How which things were at the start? The things that you want to change!

7.1 How will you find out what is the current state of each of the things you want to change?

Sometimes you needn't bother. If you are introducing PDP, then the baseline on the use of PDP may well be zero.

Approaches to collecting baseline data are suggested below.

Continuing the example: Sometimes, baseline data are readily available – for example the current Learning and Teaching Strategy does or does not commit to work-based learning and its support through PDP. Sometimes, baseline data can be obtained with more or less effort from current sources – how many programmes or courses offer or require placements? How many of these use PDP? How do they use PDP? How effective is it? Study of programme and module handbooks and QA reports, and a few conversations with lecturers, may give you good enough baseline data.

But sometime the data need to be collected. You may want to know: What does 'work-related learning' mean, to staff and to students? What are staff and student attitudes to it? How do modules use PDP in connection with work-related learning? How effective is it and how do they know? Are employers involved, and if so how, and how effectively?

If you do need to research baseline data, note that the questions and instruments you use will be very similar to those you will use later for monitoring and evaluation. In this example, your questions will be about, for example, current use and effectiveness of PDP. Researching baseline data thus gives you an early pilot test of some of your evaluation instruments.

You may find it comfortable to start from questions as well as from the intended outcomes, and hence the baselines, of the work. There is a close relationship between questions and outcomes or baselines, as for example:

Question	Possible implied outcome
What are staff and student attitudes to [work-related learning]?	Students and staff will have an evidence-informed enthusiasm for the use of work-related learning
How exactly do modules use PDP in connection with work-related learning?	Staff and students will have developed particular, locally-appropriate implementations and uses of PDP to support work-related learning
How effective is PDP and how do they know?	PDP is of proven and accepted effectiveness in supporting work-related learning

Starting from the intended outcomes of your PDP venture, you can identify the relevant baseline data and identify ways to collect them. It is useful to iterate between questions and outcomes / baselines.

8 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring is undertaken throughout a venture, and evaluation at fixed points and towards the end; although monitoring and evaluation should be planned together at the start of a venture, and monitoring will produce many valuable data for the final evaluation.

Monitoring all through the venture answers such questions as:

- 8.1 *How is the venture going?*
 - 8.1a *Are we doing what we planned to do?*
 - 8.1b *Are we producing what we planned to produce?*
 - 8.1c *Are we achieving what we planned to achieve?*
 - 8.2 *In each case, how and why?*
 - 8.3 *Are we on track?*
 - 8.4 *What of relevance in the external environment has changed?*
- Good answers to these questions are backed by evidence.
Good answers also make it easier to answer these two questions:
- 8.5 *Should we be making any changes?*
 - 8.6 *If so, what?*

Evaluation, perhaps at fixed points during and certainly towards the end, asks and answers such questions as:

- 8.7 *Did the venture do what it planned to do?*
 - 8.8 *Did the venture produce what it planned to produce?*
 - 8.9 *Did the venture achieve what it planned to achieve?*
 - 8.10 *What if any changes were made to planned activities, products and outcomes during the venture? Why?*
 - 8.11 *How did the venture do, produce and achieve what it intended (after any changes to plans) to do, produce and achieve?*
 - 8.12 *Were stakeholder needs met?*
 - 8.13 *What else did the venture achieve or discover beyond its original goals?*
 - 8.14 *What are the implications for future ventures?*
- Good answers to these questions, again, are backed by evidence, and are useful.

A clear plan and schedule for the venture, showing what is to be done and delivered and achieved and spent by when, provides a perfectly adequate basis for monitoring and then evaluation to account for resources committed and outcomes attained.

Such a plan also tells you what data you will need to collect during the venture.

A report to each project management and / or steering group meeting titled 'progress against plans' will provide most of the monitoring. These reports, collated and analysed, will provide a useful and major part of the final report.

So, to plan your monitoring and evaluation, you need to answer these questions:

8.15 What does the plan or schedule for your venture commit you to doing, producing, delivering; and by when?

8.16 What outcomes does the plan or schedule for your venture commit you to achieving; and, again, by when?

And, concentrating for a while on monitoring;

8.17 How will we feed learning from monitoring back into the continued improvement of the venture?

To improve the venture on the way through, it is important to know what effects the venture is having, how far it is attaining its intended outcomes. Important, but not enough. It is also necessary to dig deeper, to understand why and how the venture is having the effects that it is having. This requires research, albeit sometimes modest in scale. There can be tensions between the various purposes and audiences for monitoring and evaluation. The team running the venture may want to shield those funding the venture from some of the robust debate and the discouraging results which may occur during, though hopefully not at the end of, the venture. And the evaluator may experience tension between his or her roles: first as critical friend to the venture, helping it to see itself in the mirror, to understand itself, and then to make any consequent changes, whether these changes be cosmetic or structural; as a developer helping the venture to become better able to monitor and evaluate itself; and then as summative evaluator. Can these tensions be solved? Subject to local political realities, the best policy is generally to adopt the greatest possible openness at every stage of the venture. This openness will build trust. Openness and trust increase the scope for productive conversations across the venture, with the team, partners, clients (including lecturers and students) and its management team and steering group. Openness and trust help the venture to learn and improve.

Continuing our previous example: You may now be starting to work with departments not hitherto active in work-related learning and PDP. You and your team compare notes. You see that you are getting very different responses from different departments and programmes. Questions; evaluation and research questions, questions with major implications for your venture; would start with 'Why do different departments and programmes respond so very differently?' and then 'What kinds of approaches work best with what kinds of departments and programmes?'

This section says little about methods for monitoring and evaluation, about interviews and questionnaires and focus groups and the like. Such methods are widely described in the literature, for example George and Cowan (1999) on formative evaluation and, on both formative and summative evaluation, the rich set of resources available through the UK Evaluation Society (2005). We suggest here (a) that clear outcomes generate their own methods for monitoring and evaluation and (b) a set of good questions will drive evaluation in appropriate directions.

Your plan for monitoring and evaluation will answer this question:

8.18 How will you monitor and evaluate the achievement of each of the intended outcomes of the venture?

The monitoring and evaluation scheme will need:

- To be rigorous and thorough enough to show, to a standard of proof acceptable to the stakeholder, that the venture has achieved its intended outcomes.
- To show how and why, as well as whether, the venture has achieved its intended outcomes.
- Also to show value for money for the evaluation function within the overall project budget.

9 Outcomes and their evaluability

Question 8.18 should prove reasonably easy to answer, particularly if the outcomes were clear. But if it does not, you need to revise the monitoring and evaluation methods and / or the intended outcomes until you can answer this question with considerable and justified confidence:

9.1 Can you evaluate the intended outcomes of your venture?

You may find it very easy to plan how you will monitor and evaluate the attainment of some outcomes; very difficult for others. In general, a well-formulated outcome contains within it clear guidance on how its attainment can be monitored and evaluated. We return to this after an extended example:

Staying with our example: It will be relatively easy to monitor and then evaluate the introduction of policy, and then the take-up of work-related learning and the associated use made of PDP, in departments and programmes across the institution. It will be similarly easy to see which departments and programmes offer academic credit for work-related learning. These are relatively easily evaluable outcomes.

But the intended outcome for the venture included to “increase the number of programmes in your HEI that make effective use of PDP for work-related learning, as part of a broader institution-wide initiative on work-related learning.” (Emphasis added.) What would ‘make effective use...’ mean, to the venture and to the institution?

There is no a priori answer to this question. The venture must negotiate and make, not find, the answer.

The venture might decide that 'make effective use...' means a particular proportion of students engaged with work-related learning; particular additional learning outcomes achieved; a particular degree of reported student satisfaction with their learning; or other possible indicators. Attainment of these could be measured or determined once they have been defined.

A good monitoring and evaluation process should also be alert to unintended outcomes, in this case to other, unplanned but valuable, ways in which programmes were making effective use of PDP for work-related learning, and perhaps for other functions.

If we do not spell out our intended outcomes for the venture in some way such as this, then monitoring and evaluation will be very difficult. This is not just a technical problem about monitoring and evaluation. It is more likely to be a problem about the intended outcomes of the venture. Ventures founded on unclear outcomes may do some good work; but we can never know whether or how far they have been successful. As evaluators sometimes say, "If you don't know where you're going, any bus will do." We should have at least some ideas on where we want our PDP ventures to go.

10 Plausible proxies

We cannot always measure the final intended effects of the venture within the lifetime of the venture itself.

We should not use this fact, this time-scale problem, as a reason not to evaluate. Having established the intended outcomes of a venture, we should then, as suggested above, plan how we could properly evaluate their attainment. We should do this even if the outcomes, and hence the evaluation plan, take us well beyond the planned lifetime of the venture. At least, having done this, we will know what compromises we have to make in our evaluation.

10.1 Which outcomes of your venture can you not measure?

10.2 In each case, why not?

The most likely reasons are:

- Timescale, as explored in the example below.
- The outcome is not expressed in a form which is evaluable, in which case you should revise it until you can see how to evaluate it, as in 9.
- Cost. You need to find proxy outcomes, as explored in this section. Cheaper methods may give you data that are almost as good. Or you may need to increase your evaluation budget.

10.3 In each case, what is the nearest relevant outcome that you can measure?

These need to be as close and as relevant as you can get.

Continuing the example: It may be felt that the policy of using PDP to support work-related learning was being effectively implemented when

students were making effective use of PDP to plan, undertake, review, value and gain accreditation for learning from work.

It will be challenging, but possible, to find out how far students are doing each of these things.

But what we may really, deep down, want to know, is – are our students more employable as a result of the venture?

This opens up a vast new area for evaluation and research, and before that for agreeing accounts of 'employability'. Perhaps we should have begun opening this up earlier. There was reference to employability, albeit a rather tentative reference, in the very first account of the overall goal of our venture, in section 3.

But it is too late to start now. So let us assume that the University has produced its account of 'employability', and that this account refers to student qualities demonstrated at graduation, and, just to make it more difficult, that we are concerned with evaluating PDP-supported work-related learning in Year 1.

We could wait until year 3 to see the employability effects of our work in Year 1. This would be frustrating.

Or we could devise proxy measures:

One element of the University's account of 'employability' at graduation may be students' ability to map their academic, personal and professional capabilities as shown in their graduation portfolio to the person specifications and job descriptions for a range of graduate jobs.

A reasonable first year proxy for this might be the ability to map their current academic and personal capabilities to one job.

This is what we must sometimes do. We must find plausible and measurable proxies; proxies that we have good reason to believe stand, and stand well, for the ultimate outcomes that we are trying to achieve, ultimate outcomes that are however technically or temporally too difficult to measure.

Where might our confidence in such proxies come from? Perhaps:

They seem plausible, knowing what we know about learning and development

They are based on local or national research

11 Reporting

We are not fans of the huge evaluation report, if only because such reports are rarely read (beyond the executive summary), and even more rarely used.

Knowledge and understandings should have been generated, via monitoring and research, during the venture, and used to improve the venture. More substantial understandings should be disseminated through the normal academic and professional means – conference presentations and workshops, published papers.

Near the start of this tool we suggested that one aim of the evaluation process should be to develop the capacity of the venture to monitor and evaluate its own practice. If this has happened, the final report from the project will be critical, reflective, evaluative, even scholarly. An external evaluator, if one has been used, should check carefully, and hopefully be able to sign off, the project report as having

been appropriately and accurately evaluative. The external evaluator will almost certainly wish to add evaluative comments and suggestions from their own external perspective.

The final report from the venture, together with the evaluation report, should ask and answer these questions, already posed in section 8:

- 11.1 Did the venture do what it planned to do?*
- 11.2 Did the venture produce what it planned to produce?*
- 11.3 Did the venture achieve what it planned to achieve?*
- 11.4 What if any changes were made to planned activities, products and outcomes during the venture? Why?*
- 11.5 How did the venture do, produce and achieve what it intended (after any changes to plans) to do, produce and achieve?*
- 11.6 Were stakeholder needs met?*
- 11.7 What else did the venture achieve or discover beyond its original goals?*
- 11.8 What are the implications for future ventures?*

Concluding comments:

Over-prioritising evaluation?

Does not all this emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, and on the evaluability of outcomes, involve the tails of monitoring and evaluation wagging the whole venture?

Yes, to some extent it does.

And is this not a bad thing?

I suggest, no, it is not a bad thing.

Why not?

- Because the resources committed to any venture have competed successfully with many other possible uses for those resources. It seems reasonable that a venture should show resources well spent, not just in the narrow budgetary sense of 'spent on the planned things' but also in the more important sense of 'spent in attainment of the intended outcomes'.
- Because you can use data from monitoring to improve the current venture, and data from final evaluation to inform future such ventures.
- And because the information and understanding that arise from rigorous monitoring and evaluation can be published, and can inform the wider fields of PDP, institutional change, learning and teaching...

There has to be some flexibility. Monitoring and evaluation should look for unexpected learning and outcomes as well as for attainment of the planned outcomes. Running a development venture is not an exact science. Serendipity is of course to be welcomed. For example:

As the venture progresses, hopefully it will learn and adopt more effective ways of working.

It may well learn of other related ventures, or other sources of information and ideas, with whom it may decide to co-operate.

Under such circumstances it may be appropriate to change (through any necessary negotiations) the intended outcomes, and thus the methods for monitoring and evaluation.

There is no virtue in continuing to follow what has become the wrong star.

Other evaluation methodologies?

This tool offers a fairly rationalist / positivist approach to monitoring and evaluation, with an emphasis on explicit outcomes and their attainment. Radically different, though complementary, approaches have been proposed and used. Some of these are explored further in Baume (2003). Briefly, to give a flavour:

The **illuminative approach** aims "to explore, describe, analyse, elucidate and portray – in other words to illuminate – the practices and processes of teaching and learning, broadly defined, as they occur in their national

settings." (Miller and Parlett 1974). "The illuminative approach ... [is] ...problem centred..., practitioner-oriented..., cross-disciplinary..., methodologically eclectic..., and heuristically organised, progressively focusing and refining the areas of inquiry as the study unfolds."

Stake (2002) advocates: "Above all, evaluation is the discernment of the good" and calls for evaluation to be holistic, thoughtful, experiential. It should find and tell the evaluand's story, asking 'What's happening here?'" Stake calls this '**responsive evaluation**'.

Still concentrating on the good, Ludema et al (2000) propose this prompt for an evaluation: "Think of a time in your entire experience of this [development venture] when you have felt most excited, most engaged and most alive. What were the forces and factors that made it a great experience? What was it about you, others and your organisation that made it a peak experience for you?" The authors call this '**appreciative enquiry**'.

The author

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This tool has been heavily adapted from Baume, D. (2004). A tool for evaluating employability ventures. York, The Higher Education Academy.

Questions, your answers to which give you an evaluation strategy for your PDP venture

Please note that clicking on a question will take you to the appropriate section of the main text.

- 1.1 *What exactly are you evaluating?*
- 2.1 *Who are the stakeholders?*
- 2.2 *What do stakeholders want from the project?*
- 2.3 *What are their evaluation questions?*
- 2.4 *What are their criteria for a satisfactory answer to their evaluation questions?*
- 3.1 *What do you intend your venture to achieve?*
- 3.2 *What, specifically, is this venture intended to achieve with respect to PDP? Or*
- 3.3 *What particular difference(s) is this venture intended to make with respect to PDP? Or*
- 3.4 *How will PDP contribute to the wider goals of the venture?*
- 4.1 *To whom is the venture intended to make this difference (or, again, the plural form)?*
- 5.1 *Through whom, through which people and groups, will you need to work to achieve the ultimate purposes of this venture?*
- 6.1 *What particular differences will this venture need to make to each of these people or groups? Or*
- 6.2 *What do we need each of these people or groups to do if the overall goal is to be achieved?*
- 7.1 *How will you find out what is the current state of each of the things you want to change?*
- 8.1 *How is the venture going?*
 - 8.1a *Are we doing what we planned to do?*
 - 8.1b *Are we producing what we planned to produce?*
 - 8.1c *Are we achieving what we planned to achieve?*
- 8.2 *In each case, how and why?*
- 8.3 *Are we on track?*
- 8.4 *What of relevance in the external environment has changed?*
- 8.5 *Should we be making any changes?*
- 8.6 *If so, what?*
- 8.7 *Did the venture do what it planned to do?*
- 8.8 *Did the venture produce what it planned to produce?*
- 8.9 *Did the venture achieve what it planned to achieve?*
- 8.10 *What if any changes were made to planned activities, products and outcomes during the venture? Why?*
- 8.11 *How did the venture do, produce and achieve what it intended (after any changes to plans) to do, produce and achieve?*
- 8.12 *Were stakeholder needs met?*

8.13 *What else did the venture achieve or discover beyond its original goals?*

8.14 *What are the implications for future ventures?*

Overall:

8.15 *What activities does the plan or schedule for your venture commit you to doing, producing, delivering; and by when?*

8.16 *What outcomes does the plan or schedule for your venture commit you to achieving; and, again, by when?*

8.17 *How will we feed learning from monitoring back into the continued improvement of the venture?*

8.18 *How will you monitor and evaluate the achievement of each of the intended outcomes of the venture?*

9.1 *Can you evaluate the intended outcomes of your venture?*

10.1 *Which outcomes of your venture can you not measure?*

10.2 *In each case, why not?*

10.3 *In each case, what is the nearest relevant outcome that you can measure?*

And, for the final report, again:

11.1 *Did the venture do what it planned to do?*

11.2 *Did the venture produce what it planned to produce?*

11.3 *Did the venture achieve what it planned to achieve?*

11.4 *What if any changes were made to planned activities, products and outcomes during the venture? Why?*

11.5 *How did the venture do, produce and achieve what it intended (after any changes to plans) to do, produce and achieve?*

11.6 *Were stakeholder needs met?*

11.7 *What else did the venture achieve or discover beyond its original goals?*

11.8 *What are the implications for future ventures?*

A Guide and Toolkit for Evaluating Personal Development Planning

John Peters, NTF

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Guidance on Evaluation of PDP

'Evaluation is a designed and purposeful enquiry which is open to comment.'
(Philip Crompton in Harvey 1998)

Effective evaluation should be simple but is not easy. It can take considerable effort to clarify the purpose, scope and methodology of an evaluation. It is often even more problematic to define the evaluation clearly and early enough to pursue it through data gathering and interpretation in time to provide meaningful, timely and significant results. Some of the issues to consider when designing and conducting evaluations are:

- Why evaluate now?
- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- What is the audience for the evaluation?
- Who carries out the evaluation?
- What is the focus of the proposed evaluation?
- What is the scope and scale of the evaluation?
- What is the methodology of the proposed evaluation?
- What are the appropriate methods for collecting evaluation data?
- What other evaluation design issues should be addressed?
- How can the data be analysed?
- What are the issues in presenting the results of evaluations?

By working through these questions it is hoped that this guide will provide PDP practitioners with a useful aid to the scholarly implementation of evaluations.

1. Why evaluate now?

There is considerable pressure within the HE sector to be more evaluative in our approach to educational change and innovation. Government agencies, fund holders, institutional management, colleagues and even students, are challenging us to demonstrate that:

- our practice is evidence based (Jackson, 2004).
- our systems to support Personal Development Planning [PDP] are appropriate and effective.
- engagement in PDP is beneficial for learners.

The key paper setting out the cross-sectoral agreement on Progress Files and PDP (QAA *et al* 2001) defined PDP as, 'a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.' This definition is perhaps enhanced by Gough *et al's* (2003) research question which defines PDP as 'processes that connect reflection, recording, planning and action'. The cross-sectoral agreement also stated that, 'it will be important to evidence benefits [of Progress file and PDP] in order to justify the substantial investment that will need to be made to support this initiative.' The quality guidelines on PDP within that document urged, 'Institutions will be expected to have mechanisms to assure themselves that PDP is being implemented effectively'. More recently the scoping report of the Burgess group (2004) on measuring student achievement and

standards recommended, 'There should continue to be evaluation of the impact of [on *sic*] learning and the representation of learning and achievement of different forms of Personal Development Planning.'

Considerable improvements in the evidence base and, in many cases, our practices in research and evaluation are required to answer these challenges. While Gough *et al* (2003) have called for 'an increase in well-designed experimental research to add to the descriptive research of PDP in the UK', Clegg (2004) has argued the need for PDP practitioner questions to be posed and answered through less rarefied research and evaluation. With many HEIs introducing PDP systems in response to the sector-wide agreement, there has never been a better time to develop our evaluation methods and results so as to provide for robust evidence-based practice in HE's implementation of PDP.

2. What is the purpose of the evaluation?

'There is no substitute for having a clear purpose for an evaluation'
(Crompton in Harvey 1998)

Early thought on the purpose of any evaluation is crucial. A key initial question is about the audience for any evaluation findings. Different audiences imply different purposes. Is the evaluation intended to provide (one or all of):

- justification for receipt of project funding?
- evidence and feedback to improve local practice?
- material for peer reviewed publication?

This threefold distinction is a somewhat less theoretical version of Chelimsky's (1997) distinction between evaluation for accountability, evaluation for development and evaluation to add to our knowledge.


Perhaps one of the problems of many currently available PDP evaluations is that they are driven by the need to provide justification and accountability; to satisfy fund-holders that project money is being well spent. It is very rare to find such evaluations concluding that the project is ineffective! Any evidence emerging into the public domain from such evaluation is understandably treated with some suspicion however open and well constructed the evaluation is shown to be. The demands of the audience for such evaluations tend to encourage the use of quantitative methods which measure the project against its stated goals or for user satisfaction. The quantitative data gives an air of objectivity to the findings though the constraints, in terms of measuring only what can be captured quantitatively and limiting evaluation to established goals, mean much may be missed. Use of an external evaluator in this situation may be appropriate as evidence of the objectivity of the exercise.

The design of evaluation aimed at improving local practice, where the practitioners themselves are the audience for the evaluation, will tend to be iterative, feeding into practice and its development over a period of time. Qualitative measures yielding rich contextual data might be more suitable in this setting. An external evaluator in this setting might operate more as a 'critical friend'. Such evaluations are more likely to be open to admissions of mistakes and therefore to learning from them. (Macdonald 2006, 7) Just because the evaluation is primarily designed to inform

local practice does not mean it might not be of considerable value to the wider community of practitioners.

Evaluation for peer reviewed publication needs to be particularly robust. The methodology has to be transparent and coherent. Whether the methods are qualitative or quantitative the theoretical underpinning must be clear and it must explicitly address issues of reliability, validity and fitness for purpose. When the researcher is also the practitioner, there is a particular need to demonstrate the robustness of the findings. Expect your findings to be distrusted because you are not perceived as an objective evaluator. Triangulation should be considered, where evidence is gathered from a variety of viewpoints, possibly using a mix of methods, to provide as full a picture as possible. Many PDP practitioners currently do not even consider this as a possible purpose perhaps due to limited confidence in the methodologies of evaluation. However, if we are to develop the evidence base we want then we should increase evaluation for publication or dissemination. Without this it will prove very difficult to compare different ways of implementing and supporting PDP and to reach some well-founded judgements about what works. Such evaluation for publication, dissemination and comparison needs to be 'designed-in' from the outset either by giving greater thought to our evaluation strategies or perhaps by using the expertise of an established educational researcher as an external evaluator.

So how might the purpose of the evaluation shape the process?		
Evaluation for Justification	Evaluation for Development	Evaluation for Dissemination
Focus on quantitative data	Focus on qualitative data	Focus on robust methodology
Focused on current situation and pre-set goals	Forward looking	Combination: sharing effective practice and lessons
Audits, system usage data, satisfaction questionnaires	Interviews, focus groups, appreciative enquiry	Triangulation of research methods



3. What is the audience for the evaluation?

As has already been seen, this is closely related to the issue of purpose. However it adds a further dimension and perhaps a further bullet point to the list of 3 above when we consider that a major purpose of PDP evaluations might be persuasion! It is about seeking to evidence the benefits of engagement in PDP. If evaluation for


justification is aimed at fund holders, evaluation for improving practice is for ourselves (locally and collectively) and evaluation for knowledge is for the wider academic audience, then evaluation for persuasion is aimed at a far wider group.

It might be useful to use the language of ‘stakeholders’ here (Baume & Baume 1995). The stakeholders are all those who have an interest in PDP. The stakeholders who need to be persuaded of PDP’s efficacy might include:

- fundholders
- collaborators
- academic staff
- heads of academic departments
- central service staff
- university senior managers
- national bodies such as UUK
- government departments and, not forgetting,
- employers
- students.

With all these different audiences it becomes important to ask what the particular concerns and questions are for each of these groups. Fundamentally it will be about demonstrating how PDP is meeting the needs or expectations of each of these groups. It may not be possible for one evaluation to address the needs of all these groups so a decision might be needed about the key priorities or about how the evaluation results might be packaged and presented differently for different stakeholders.

So what do my key stakeholders want or need from the evaluation?			
Managers	Academic staff	Students	PDP Practitioners
Are we meeting Quality Guidelines?	Proof PDP works or is of value in their discipline	Proof PDP works or is of value for them	Ideas to enhance implementation of PDP
Is our money being well-spent on this initiative?	Practical examples of effective practice	More effective, consistent support	Sharing of evaluated practice that works
Is PDP delivering on retention & employability?	To be consulted or involved	To be consulted or involved	Evidence to convince sceptics



4. Who carries out the evaluation?

In other words, who is responsible for collecting any evaluation data and who analyses it, interprets it and reports it? This question is closely related to the question of audience but will also be influenced by the means by which PDP has been implemented and by funding issues. The language of 'stakeholders' might again be helpful in the context of evaluation design here. Effective evaluation will seek to involve all the stakeholders as much as possible in the evaluation process and even to involve them in negotiation of its purposes and focus. This does not just mean seeking to involve the proposed audience in evaluation design but also might lead to a blurring of distinctions between the project participants and evaluators. Inclusive evaluation is more likely to result in shared ownership and acceptance of the findings.

Possible stakeholder evaluators include: ourselves as practitioners, academics as lecturers, programme leaders or personal tutors; educational developers or careers personnel external to implementation; educational evaluators internal to the institution; external evaluators; representatives of students.

- **Ourselves** as practitioners and leaders of PDP projects and practice. This is probably the most usual current practice. We know what we are seeking to achieve and are therefore perhaps best placed to understand and evaluate what happens. This can also be justified in methodological terms within an action research approach. However it can give rise to misgivings about the objectivity of the evaluation and it might limit the ownership and impact of any findings. We might be too close to the project to question assumptions and ask obvious questions. We may also be uncomfortable with or unused to theoretically-informed evaluation.
- **Academics** are in a good position to collect small-scale data on student perceptions and any effects on academic performance. They may be motivated by the desire to improve their practice and some may also be interested in publishing their findings as research output. However many will not and few have much time to spare. They may well be willing to supply data if it is easily gathered but less likely to want to be involved in the write-up. Involving them in the evaluation sends a powerful signal to them about their importance to the initiative and clearly establishes that their input is valued.
- **Educational developers** are one stage removed from such data, but tend to have good networks to draw on. They may also see the bigger picture of institutional change in relation to policy. This can be highly important given the educational development and policy shifts that are needed to implement as fundamental a change in pedagogic practice as PDP sometimes entails. Educational developers are one of the very few stakeholder groups that are likely to view such change positively! By no means all have been trained in educational research methods and they may lack knowledge of methodologies and confidence in analysis, interpretation and reporting. This may be especially so in relation to peer-reviewed journals, where some will lack experience and practice as it is not necessarily a requirement of the role to undertake research.

- **Careers staff** are perhaps further removed from academic practice, but do have different sources of data to call on and good contacts with the students themselves. They are likely to see PDP through their priorities about employability but again this can be a strong motivator. Again they are likely to lack confidence in educational research.
- **Educational evaluators within the institution** such as educational or educational psychology research staff are more likely to possess the expertise in methodology, analysis and interpretation. They generally need access to the data sources to be facilitated. Furthermore they are not a particularly common species despite their value. It usually needs some commitment from senior management to find the funding for internal evaluation personnel because they do not necessarily have any intrinsic motivation to become involved.
- **External evaluators**, as mentioned above, are likely to be funded from and focused on projects. They have the expertise and in theory they have the objectivity. The relationship can be very different depending on the funding arrangements; ranging from evaluation as monitoring and evaluator as judge, to evaluation as peer support and evaluator as critical friend. External evaluators are dependent on institutional staff to facilitate their access to data, and they can only deal with data collected during the life of the project. If it is theorised that the important effects of personal development planning processes may take weeks, months or years to show themselves, project funding, and hence external evaluators, may be out of the question.
- **Student representatives.** Students are the key stakeholder group as the ultimate recipients, exponents and, hopefully, beneficiaries of PDP. They are often the fodder of evaluations but involving them or their representatives actively in the evaluation again sends a powerful message about how we value them and their contribution. Students may be able to get more honest and open responses from fellow students but are likely to need significant support and guidance in evaluation methodology. Actively engaging students also has the additional educational benefit for the students from their involvement in a live evaluation project.

This leads us to the next and probably the most important set of questions.

5. What is the focus of the proposed evaluation?

Alongside clarifying the purpose of the evaluation it is necessary to establish exactly what is being evaluated. This is much more difficult than it sounds and it is at this stage many evaluations flounder due to lack of clarity. Time spent defining the evaluation focus is rarely wasted and can save considerable effort and confusion at a later stage. Only once this has been established can any informed decision on the appropriate measures, variables or data sets be made and only then should an appropriate methodology for capturing those be considered.


It would be helpful, perhaps to start by defining what you mean by PDP. This needs to go beyond the obvious national definitions and tease-out what it means in practice in your setting. Is it a process or a thing? Is it a broad learning process, a series of

related clearly-structured activities, is it a curriculum activity or an extra-curricula one. Do you tend to emphasise any particular element of PDP in your model; self-assessment, action planning, recording achievement or reflection? Is the term associated with a particular PDP tool; such as a file of documents and records or an ePortfolio?

The next step is to ask what PDP is for in your setting. Is it primarily about supporting professional development, enhancing skills and employability, or supporting student learning? (Clegg 2004) What are the claims you are making for it and are these what it should be judged against?

Finally, are you evaluating PDP or are you evaluating one aspect of the implementation of PDP in your particular setting? Given the complexity of the ideas and processes of PDP the answer to this question should be apparent as soon as it is asked. For most of us the key questions are about the effective implementation of PDP and trying to find out what works.

So what exactly am I evaluating?



In the case of a 'simple' evaluation of the implementation of a file to support student PDP, what is being evaluated? Is it:

- PDP
- the individual elements of the PDP file,
- the PDP file,
- support systems for the PDP file,
- whether staff and/or students like the PDP file,
- the perceived usefulness of the file for staff and/or students,
- use of the file,
- the impact of the file (what is meant by impact?),
- whether a PDP process has been engendered or supported by the file,
- the value of the PDP process engendered or supported by the file,
- staff and student attitudes to the PDP process,
- whether staff or student attitudes have changed,
- whether student learning has been improved,
- whether results have improved,
- whether certain pre-defined project goals or targets have been achieved, etc., etc.?

It is certainly worth differentiating between at least three foci of evaluation here; internal evaluation, goal-based evaluation, and contextual evaluation.

Internal evaluation would focus on the PDP tool or system itself. This focus has the advantage of making for more simple data collection because many of the questions can be answered by gathering simple quantitative data. It would ask questions such as whether the different elements of the tool function, the extent to which they are used, the amount of records generated and whether the components are interoperable.

Goal-based evaluation would focus on the pre-set aims and goals of the project. These might be simple or complex and might prove difficult to evaluate because there may not be obvious measures for some of the pre-established goals. David Baume's evaluation tool is particularly helpful in supporting thinking about the

defining of project goals. If the project has set out to improve student performance through implementing PDP then it is student performance that should be measured. As Macdonald suggests, it might be a matter of asking all the stakeholders in the project ‘how would you judge this project to be a success?’ and evaluating against the goals this question reveals (Macdonald 2006, 8).

Contextual evaluation seeks to examine how the tool or system functions within its particular educational setting. Such a focus immediately admits that many findings will be context specific. Such a focus is likely to seek rich, qualitative data about staff and student attitudes towards the tool or system and whether engagement with PDP has shifted attitudes. Such an evaluation is more likely than the other two to uncover unexpected outcomes or impacts.

Further distinction can be made between evaluating **processes or effects** (Lewis 2001). The current situation gives us the opportunity to evaluate the processes by which PDP is being introduced and implemented as well as the effects of that implementation. It could be argued that much more significant improvements in practice might be achieved by a greater focus on process in evaluations. So, rather than asking whether staff and students like or are using the PDP tool, the evaluation could turn back on us as practitioners and might examine the process we adopted to roll-out PDP. Such evaluation might feel more personal and threatening but the learning from such evaluation may be all the more powerful.

Finally, Donald Kirkpatrick’s (1998) influential conception of the four levels of evaluation can help when conceptualising what the evaluation is trying to measure and what question should, therefore, be asked. Kirkpatrick’s levels were originally designed to apply to training events but can as easily be applied to the evaluation of any intervention. The four levels are cumulative and he suggests any robust evaluation should work through them all. To often PDP and other learning and teaching evaluations in HE stop at level one.

Table: Kirkpatrick’s four levels of evaluation


Level	Name	Description of Evaluation questions at each level
1	Reaction	How do recipients of the PDP intervention feel about it? Do they like it, enjoy it or find it useful? Are they satisfied with it?
2	Learning	What is the change in the knowledge and skills as a result of the PDP intervention? Have they learnt something or gained something from engagement in PDP?
3	Behaviour or Transfer	Is there any indication of the application of this learning in practice? Has their behaviour changed? What are they doing differently as a result of engaging in PDP?
4	Results	What difference is the changed behaviour making? What impact is engagement in PDP having on key national measures of HE as applied to the participating group? [e.g. retention, progression & employability]

6. What is the scope and scale of the evaluation?

If the focus of the evaluation is unclear the scope and scale often suffer. A clearly focused evaluation will collect only the data necessary to address the identified issues. In compensating for a lack of clear focus many evaluations collect far too much data in the hope that it will be possible to 'make sense of it all' after the event. This does at least sometimes allow for the capture of unforeseen outcomes but it more commonly results in extensive effort to produce data that will never be used.

The scope and scale of an evaluation should be in balance with the project or practice being evaluated. The evaluation of PDP implementation across an institution should be more extensive than the evaluation of a particular PDP exercise within a module. But larger scale evaluation does not necessarily imply more general or less focused evaluation. Equally it should not be assumed that, just because an evaluation is being undertaken locally - at faculty, subject or module level - that it does not need any further thought about its specific focus.

It is not feasible or even possible to collect and analyse data about every aspect of PDP at once, whether across an institution or within a department. If the work being evaluated is local, small-scale and developmental then it is important the evaluation is similar in scope and allows for quick feedback into the work. If the evaluation is of a larger or long term initiative then it may be worthwhile considering a number of small targeted evaluations which address issues important to the initiative at different stages of its lifecycle (Sommerlad 1992) and thus can inform its ongoing development, rather than conducting one large-scale study of its overall impact.

What might a life-cycle model of PDP evaluation look like?	
 At the birth	Auditing current practice to see what is already out there and what can be learnt from it. Gathering base-line data.
Growing pains	Emphasis on developmental evaluation to improve both the process of implementation and the practice of PDP. Identifying and sharing effective practice within the institution. Monitoring roll-out.
Maturity	Developmental evaluation to improve different elements of PDP practice. Sharing effective practice within the institution and across the sector. Monitoring implementation.

Even with local practice it is often worth considering using a number of evaluations that clearly target a specific aspect of practice over time rather than adopting the same general approach each year. For example, you may wish to evaluate and improve a module which has PDP-related exercises and activities embedded within it. Asking students broadly whether they found the module useful might generate

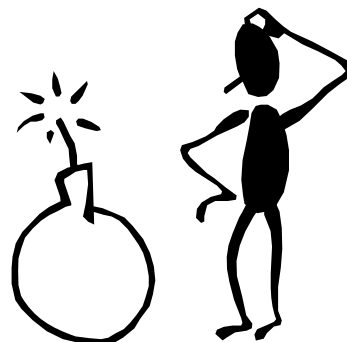
some interesting responses but the unfocused question could result in vague answers. It is also difficult to see how data that showed 60% of students found the module useful could be used to improve the module. It might be more helpful to focus this year on exactly how students were introduced to the idea of PDP and what they understand PDP to be as a result. This data could be analysed to help hone the introduction next time and to undertake activities to help address any student misconceptions immediately. Next time the module runs the evaluation could move on to look at the impact of a particular action planning exercise on student conceptions of planning. Over a number of years the module can be tweaked and a far greater understanding of student learning on it will be gained by the tutor.

A particular issue with project evaluation is that the pre-set goals may be short or long term. Short term goals will be easier to measure within the period of the project and may even allow for a number of iterations. However, long term impacts may never be measured because of the project's finite timescale. Anecdotal evidence suggests many of the impacts of PDP are long term and that measuring these long term goals is therefore fundamental to capturing its benefits. There is a particular need for longitudinal studies of the impact of PDP to track the development of students from school through University and into the workplace to see whether PDP has met some of its policy claims relating to employability. In the absence of funding for such a study it might be possible to use proxy measurements as discussed by David Baume in section 10 of his tool for evaluating PDP ventures.

7. What is the methodology of the proposed evaluation?

This should be defined primarily as a result of answers to the previous questions but is also likely to be determined in part by our own philosophical position and approach to educational change more generally. Do evaluations you feel comfortable with.

It is important to be able and willing to explain the theoretical underpinnings of your evaluation but it is too easy to be sidetracked into lengthy and often fruitless debate about enquiry paradigms and methodologies. For example a distinction is often made between qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Quantitative methods are commonly portrayed as being more objective, scientific,



dry and factual while qualitative methods are more subjective, social, rich and attitudinal. There is some basis in this distinction but there is really no such clear-cut differentiation. Quantitative methods can be used to generate data on attitudes while qualitative data can be analysed quantitatively using, for example, textual analysis tools.

Quantitative methods are sometimes used to give an air of spurious accuracy and objectivity to evaluation findings. A quantitative study which finds 73.45% of students are engaging with PDP does not really do much to improve on a focus group discussion which suggests a good majority of students are involved. However, with skilled application of statistical analysis, quantitative methodologies can provide highly complex and nuanced results and are the only way to handle large amounts of

data. They are particularly useful for measuring changes in specific variables against clearly established goals. They are therefore most useful if you already have a clear idea of what the variables are.

Qualitative evaluations tend to focus on attitudinal change and human interactions. They often admit to being context specific and can be more intent on exploring the process of change rather than end results. The evaluator is likely to be much more involved throughout the life span of any project, acting as an observer, critical friend or co-commentator. Such methods tend to be more open and exploratory than quantitative methods, allowing for the discovery of unforeseen factors or variables. However one infamous observation from using such anthropological approaches is the Hawthorne Effect, when the subjects of evaluative study improve their performance purely because they are the focus of study.

So it is clear the choice is about much more than whether to use quantitative or qualitative methods. There are many choices, not always between extreme positions but in terms of a continuum between these positions. Perhaps it might be more useful to consider where your interests lie and what your evaluation is intended to achieve in terms of a number of related choices, so placing it in a multi dimensional model. Some key conceptions to consider are:

Positivist v Phenomenological Paradigms

A Positivist paradigm would assume that there is a real, objective world which can be known, described and understood through detailed objective scientific study. Scientific method is the privileged approach within this paradigm though many other approaches can be applied to seek out the factual, objective truth.

The Phenomenological paradigm suggests we can only know what we experience, there is no objective reality - in fact no subject or object - only the experiences and how we make sense of them. The methodologies used within this paradigm, such as phenomenographic research, will therefore tend to be about gathering detailed descriptions of people's experiences and then seeking to compare, contrast and analyse these to establish whether there are any essential commonalities. (Patton 1990, 70)

Researcher Controlled v Naturalistic Enquiry

At its most extreme, researcher controlled enquiry seeks to limit all variables in the situation apart from the one being tested. This is usually based on the formation of a hypothesis about what intervention might make a difference which the experiment then seeks to test. In many situations this requires the use of parallel control and intervention groups. Pre and post testing of the groups might well be used to seek to isolate the impacts of any intervention. Gough *et al* (2003) have called for more of this type of research into UK PDP.

Naturalistic enquiry seeks to study real world situations in all their complexity. Situations are allowed to unfold naturally, without intervention or manipulation and there is a conscious effort to remain open to whatever emerges without the

constrained of pre-determined hypotheses. Unobtrusive observation is likely to be a key approach adopted and rich broad data is a must.

Generalisable v Context Specific

Again extreme positions would argue that either the findings of any evaluation are general and would apply in any given situation or they are entirely context specific and only resulted from this one specific case shaped by its own subtly different social historical, cultural and educational context. The more complex the situation the more context specific outcomes are likely to be and the more detail about the context will need to be gathered and analysed. So, how important is the particular context to your work? How much do you want to be able to claim the lessons are generalisable?

Neutral or Objective outsider v Participatory enquiry

To what extent is the evaluator or are the evaluators part of what is being evaluated? Those working within a positivist paradigm might place great weight on the objectivity of the evaluator; however, in many cases the researcher/evaluator has made the intervention that is being studied. The Phenomenological paradigm would not allow for the evaluator to claim objectivity but many related approaches would emphasise the need for the evaluator to be a neutral observer who is not an active participant in events.

However some approaches, such as **Action Research**, make great play of the active role of the evaluator/research in events. Action research is variously defined in the literature but has a number of common features:

- It is about research in action in a real life setting which both produces a change and adds to our understanding or knowledge
- It is based on a repeated cycle of studying a situation, planning an intervention, making an intervention and evaluating that intervention
- It is intended to empower practitioners as both the instigators and evaluators in the process and to encourage collaboration between them

Some forms of Action Research take this empowerment to its extreme by seeking to engage all stakeholders in the process. Here no distinction is made between the subjects of the evaluation and the evaluators because they are one and the same. Such participatory action research has many outcomes beyond the evaluation in terms of building communities of practice and sometimes seeking political change.

Whatever your thoughts and decisions on these issues don't let them cloud the key questions posed earlier. An evaluation methodology is a means to an end and should not come to dominate what you are trying to achieve.

8. What are the appropriate methods for collecting evaluation data?

There are many methods for generating evaluation data and only a few can be briefly mentioned here. Your choice of method or methods should be primarily driven by your answers to questions posed earlier in this guide. The answers to those questions should have clarified what sort of data you need in order to answer the

evaluation questions you are asking. It is also important to be clear what will count as evidence or data for your purposes.

For example, if you have a project goal about student engagement with your ePDP system you might want to collect usage data from the system. If you want to know whether a cohort of students think each of the different elements of your PDP system are useful, then you might use a questionnaire asking them to rate the usefulness of these elements. You might want to flesh out these results with some detail on why they find certain elements useful and what they think could be improved, either by asking some open questions or, perhaps better, by using a focus group discussion of these issues with a sample of the students. This triangulation of methods will provide a combination of hard quantitative data on use, some numerical data on student attitudes towards the system and some qualitative material which should help explain the quantitative results and provide some indications of a way forward.

At present PDP evaluation appears to be dominated by this combination of practitioner constructed questionnaires, focus group interviews and the use of usage information generated by ePDP systems. There is a much wider range of methods available and it is only possible to mention a small selection here but we should consider the following:

Pre/post tests – It is often useful to have data from before and after an intervention or change. Unfortunately in the complex world of educational activity there is still no guarantee that other variables might not be responsible for changes in the results. But, if the evaluation is about impact and change, data from pre-tests is invaluable.

Questionnaires – Come in bewildering variety and can generate very different types of data. Closed questionnaires are the simplest, soliciting yes/no answers, answers from a closed range of options or levels of agreement with a series of statements on a Likert scale, which can be analysed quantitatively. More open questionnaires can elicit qualitative data but even closed questionnaires can be used to generate quantitative data on attitudinal change. There is a real art to setting questionnaire questions; keep them clear and simple, have only one point to each question, avoid leading questions, and try to keep the number of questions to a minimum.

There are already many tried and tested questionnaires available to gather data on a whole range of issues including student self-efficacy, learning styles or approaches to learning and it may be worthwhile considering using such tools rather than inventing your own. It is important to be aware that, though questionnaires often generate hard numerical data this data is still usually only attitudinal – it is what the respondents think or feel is the case and does not necessarily reflect actual behaviour.

Document analysis – this can range from the complexities of textual analysis through to methodologies more commonly associated with Quality Auditors. Using existing data that is generated by the University anyway has the advantage of saving time on data collection. Data on grades achieved, retention figures, employment of graduates, etc., is hard factual evidence that relates directly to claims made for PDP. If

personal development records are being produced as a result of PDP work then the records themselves could reveal a great deal about the nature of users' engagement with PDP and its impact on them.

Individual interviews – These too can range from very structured formats generating quantitative data through to completely open discussion generating purely qualitative evidence. Again, there is an art to writing interview questions; they should be open-ended, neutral, singular and clear. (Patton 1990, 295)

Interviews can, of course, seem very time consuming, especially if transcription and analysis time are taken into account. However even a large scale evaluation can still use individual interviews, either as an exploratory method to get some idea of the variable to be included in questionnaires or as a means in themselves if used in combination with effective sampling. Using a few interview-based individual case studies to follow a student through their engagement with PDP can be powerful.

Repertory Grids – These offer a particular way of getting at an individual's understanding and construction of meaning. By asking individuals to list a number of oppositional concepts and position themselves in relation to these it is possible to tease-out their level of understanding. Pre and post use of this method might result in the individual constructing a much more complex and nuanced set of oppositional concepts after the event and thus illustrating in detail a major shift in thinking. This is a time consuming approach but if you are intent on looking at the impact of PDP on learning then it is a very rich method. (Kelly 1963)

Focus groups – a commonly used form of group interview, usually a facilitated group discussion. These can produce very rich data because group members are seeking to clarify their views not just in relation to the interviewer but also in relation to each other. Rather than having a lot of questions, the facilitator should aim to have a limited number of prompts to discussion. There are many forms of focus group technique and many issues (Krueger & Casey 2000) including whether the sample and discussion are designed with the purpose of seeking to reach consensus or to highlight divergent views.

Observation – the most obviously anthropological evaluation method. The evaluator observes and provides an 'outsider's' account. This can promote fruitful discussion and development by inviting comment and discussion.

Appreciative enquiry – participants are asked by the evaluator to focus on the positives of the experience and, by teasing-out what made these so positive, recommendations for improvement can emerge. Such a method is particularly appropriate for developmental evaluation.

Mind Maps – Asking students or staff to set-out their conceptions of PDP visually as a mind map is a good way of gaining insight into their understanding of PDP and PDP processes. Pre and post testing using this method

could capture conceptual changes. Or perhaps ask for conceptions of employability before and after a PDP related exercise on it.

Personal record – keeping a personal development plan, learning journal, reflective diary or critical incident log. How much more appropriate could it be than to evaluate PDP through the use of PDP?

9. What other evaluation design issues should be addressed?

This document is not a guide to research design. It seeks to support improvements in the quality of current PDP evaluation not to turn PDP practitioners into educational researchers. However there are a number of basic research concepts which need to be addressed. Further information on research methods is included in the references at the end of this document.

Validity – An evaluation is valid if it is measuring and evaluating what it claims to be evaluating. This is not always as straightforward as might be thought. A questionnaire asking students whether a PDP system is useful is gathering data on whether students think it is useful. It is not evidence that the system is used or that it is being used effectively or that it is making a difference to student learning. To measure these things would need data on usage levels and changes in student conceptions [if you accept learning is about changing conceptions that is!].

Reliability – Is often tested by the question ‘could another evaluator repeat this approach and get the same results?’ This is most relevant for quantitative evaluation methods but in some situated qualitative studies this question is not particularly helpful. What is more important is that your methods are clear and that another evaluator could test your findings by analysing your approach and, if necessary, re-applying your methods.

Sampling – A number of evaluation methods may involve sampling and it is important to distinguish different types of sample. A representative sample would seek to provide a smaller group but with subsets still in the same proportion as in the overall set. A purposive sample aims to include a representative of all the different subsets from the overall set. A random sample is ... random! If you wish to make generalised claims on the basis of data gathered from a sample group then it is vital you can demonstrate the sampling method was robust. For example, just calling for volunteers is likely to result in an unrepresentative sample of those keen to share their views.

Triangulation – The implication of this concept for evaluation design is that to get a rounded and more reliable picture of practice requires analysis of data from a number of different viewpoints. An evaluation which relies solely on the observations of a PDP practitioner will not be as convincing as one which gathers the views of the students and academic staff and forms a fuller picture by comparing and contrasting their views with yours.

Ethical issues – It is important that the ethical issues of an evaluation are recognised and addressed from the outset. However this should not put you off evaluation as such issues are largely ruled by common sense. Any enquiry which seeks to gather and use the views of others needs to be open with them about the use to which those views will be put. If you want individuals to be candid then you will need to guarantee to them that their views are given in confidence and their identity will not be revealed in any way through dissemination of the results. It is generally accepted practice to use a signed proforma with evaluation subjects setting out their rights and your responsibilities in the enquiry.

Some research methods, such as the use of control groups, give rise to specific ethical issues. So, if, for example, you believe an intervention to be educationally beneficial, can you really justify explicitly withholding it from one group of subjects in order to prove your point?

It is probable that your institution would expect you to get clearance from their ethics committee for any evaluation leading to dissemination of its findings. If in doubt about any of these issues consult the chair of your institutional ethics committee.

10. How can the data be analysed?

Think about this before gathering the data rather than after the fact! It is too easy to collect vast quantities of numerical data only to realise there is not the time to input it into a statistical package even if you had the statistical or IT skills to analyse it properly. So collect data you know you can analyse effectively.


Statistical analysis of numerical data requires just as much care as the thoughtful sifting of qualitative feedback and there are a number of important technical issues to remember. It is unlikely that PDP evaluations will gather and analyse parametric scale data, this is continuous numerical data [not naturally occurring in discrete categories] that has a set interval between data points, has a true zero and is normally distributed e.g. a normally distributed sample of heights and weights. This is unfortunate because scale data is the highest level of data and as such it is open to the most complex manipulation and application of statistical analysis. Data collected through questionnaires will generally be non-parametric and either nominal or ordinal in nature. The nature of the data determines what sort of statistical analysis can be undertaken on it.

Nominal data represent frequency counts of occurrences that cannot be placed in any form of logical order, e.g. What degree are you undertaking? This is the lowest form of data when it comes to subsequent statistical analysis as it only offers the opportunity to create 'groups', e.g. male/female; to describe the relative proportions within these groups as percentages e.g. When asked if they engaged with PDP, 64% of the sample said yes; and to compare the number of observed frequency counts in a category with the number you would expect, e.g. 55% of the undergraduate population are female whereas 65% of those using PDP are female.

Ordinal data, created predominantly from Likert scale answers, is nominal data that has been placed in some form of order from lowest to highest. Likert scales often ask for levels of agreement with statements or levels of response to questions e.g. on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'not beneficial at all' and 5 is 'extremely beneficial', how beneficial was the group session on PDP? There is still a frequency count for each response and percentages for each can still be presented, but non-parametric inferential statistics can also be used e.g. to determine differences between two or more independent groups of respondents (males vs females) or between groups measured pre- and post- intervention or to investigate relationships between two variables e.g. grade category and perceived benefit obtained through PDP.

Qualitative data too can be overwhelming. As the key to analysing such data is often immersion in it - reading and re-reading the descriptions looking for patterns, shared responses, differing conceptions or stand-out points – too much data can make it very difficult to manage. With qualitative data it is also important to be clear what it is you are doing. Are you trying to get a feel for the situation, are you intent on looking for patterns and different conceptions, or are you focused just on finding suggestions for improvement? With rich qualitative data the intention is rarely to make any broad generalisations, it is to provide a human face and human story. While well analysed and presented statistical information is powerful because of its generality and objectivity, so a single human account carries huge force because it is real, specific and emotive.

So what can I and can't I do with data on a Likert scale?	
Can do	Can't do
Summarise using the mode, range and percentage	Summarise using the mean and standard deviation
Present as a bar chart by number or percentage	Present as a histogram
Analyse using non-parametric tests for group differences or relationships between	Analyse using parametric tests (Mogey in Harvey 1998)



11. What are the issues in presenting the results of evaluation?

Again, it is too late to be asking this question after the evaluation has been conducted. If the evaluation design has taken account of the purpose of the evaluation from the outset and addressed all the stakeholder concerns, the issues in presenting the results should be becoming apparent. What is it that you want the evaluation report to achieve?

It is unusual for an evaluation report to be purely retrospective fact finding, most reports will make recommendations for the future. Consider what form you wish

these to take. Are they going to be broad issues for consideration, perhaps aimed at fuelling reflective discussion, or are they going to take the form of a clear action plan, with SMART targets and allocated responsibilities, aimed at achieving a particular declared end? Broad recommendations run the risk of resulting in little immediate action but have advantages in allowing flexible responses and allowing your audience to contribute to any emerging action plan. A report with a tight action plan should drive development forward (if accepted) but also runs risks by presenting a clear target to critics, these risks could be minimised by sharing the draft plan with key players (especially those who are going to be asked to take responsibility for actions) in advance of full publication.

It is worth considering whether the evaluation should be reported differently for different stakeholders and what the political implications of your report might be. Put yourself behind the eyes of the reader, think about what they would find most useful and informative and write for your audience. Institutional managers and fundholders will probably prefer short quantitative reports which provide concrete factual data demonstrating the impact of any PDP work. But don't forget the power of a human story or memorable quotation. Pithy, positive headlines are required even if the underlying message is more complex. Steering groups or institutional committees may want longer, fuller reports that indicate you've been busy but an executive summary is still vitally important.

Try to make any report a balanced picture. By all means list the emerging development points but balance these with the achievements and positive impacts. Be prepared and expect your results to be mistrusted in some quarters, especially if you are using the report to ask for continued funding or more time to implement change effectively.

Put your evaluation findings in context. Just because you have been immersed in this evaluation for the last six months does not mean others will appreciate its importance or relevance. Relate the evaluation to national and institutional priorities and provide a brief context in terms of both the story so far and the eventual aims.

Remember to share your findings with the contributors to your evaluation. The importance of involving the subjects of your enquiry in the reporting loop cannot be overstated. It makes them more clearly a part of the whole project and gives you a much better chance of both getting a positive response next time you ask for evaluative feedback and involving them in resulting action points. Recommendations presented in terms of such stakeholder feedback are difficult to resist if presented as 'this is what you said' so 'this is what needs doing'.

Writing for dissemination should also mean writing for a particular audience. The same report can be packaged effectively in different ways for a student newspaper report, an informal conference paper or a peer reviewed journal article. Whatever the audience, any report should contain a summary, context, description of how the evaluation was conducted, results, analysis and conclusions or recommendations.

Remember that you are one of the key audiences for the evaluation. Ensure that the report provides you with what you want and need to be able to further your PDP work.

Digest of evaluation guidance questions

1. Why evaluate now?

- i. Is it to demonstrate our practice is scholarly and well-founded?
- ii. Is it to demonstrate our PDP systems are effective?
- iii. Is it to demonstrate that engagement in PDP is beneficial for learners?

2. What is the purpose of the evaluation?

- i. Is it to provide evidence which justifies our work or meet demands for accountability?
- ii. Is the evaluation intended to be used to further develop our own local practice?
- iii. Or, is the evaluation intended for sharing with the wider community and publication?

3. What is the audience for the evaluation?

- i. Who are the key stakeholders in your PDP work, who has any interest or involvement in it?
- ii. What are you audience's concerns and questions?
- iii. How is your PDP work addressing the needs and expectations of your stakeholders?
- iv. How might you best package the evaluation results to each group?

4. Who carries out the evaluation?

- i. Have you thought through the benefits and challenges of undertaking the evaluation yourself?
- ii. Is it possible to use, and worth considering, an external evaluator?
- iii. Are there ways in which you can involve all the key stakeholders in the evaluation?
- iv. What would be the benefits and challenges of involving academic staff, careers staff, educational researchers, academic developers or students as active participants in the evaluation?

5. What is the focus of the proposed evaluation?

- i. What exactly are you seeking to evaluate?
- ii. What do you mean by PDP?
- iii. What are the claims made for PDP in your setting?
- iv. Is the focus of the evaluation primarily internal? Is it about the specific functions and uses of a PDP tool or system?
- v. Is the evaluation goal-based? Is your PDP work being undertaken as a project with a set timescale and pre-set goals you need to demonstrate you have met?
- vi. Is the evaluation contextual? Are you interested in looking at how PDP is working in a specific setting with all the multiplicity of views and influences that might be operating upon it in that setting?

- vii. Are you interested just in the effects of PDP implementation or might it be worthwhile focusing on the processes by which PDP is being implemented?
- viii. Are you evaluating for satisfaction, learning, application or results?
- ix. So, what is your evaluation question?

6. What is the scope and scale of the evaluation?

- i. Is the proposed evaluation manageable, reasonable and in proportion to the scale of the PDP work being evaluated?
- ii. Might it be worthwhile undertaking a number of small, targeted evaluations over the lifecycle of the PDP work?
- iii. How are you going to capture the long term impacts of your PDP work?

7. What is the methodology of the proposed evaluation?

- i. Are quantitative or qualitative methods more appropriate to seek data to help answer your evaluation question?
- ii. Are you seeking to address factual issues or to understand more complex issues such as attitudes, beliefs and experiences?
- iii. Is the evaluator to be an objective outsider or a participant in the activity being evaluated?
- iv. Can you justify your chosen methodology?

8. What are the appropriate tools for evaluation?

- i. Do you wish to use common tools such as focus groups, system data and questionnaires or alternatives such as pre/post tests, individual interviews or reflective records?
- ii. Are you aware of the strengths and weaknesses of these tools for answering the question you want addressed?

9. What other evaluation design issues should be addressed?

- i. Is your evaluation valid? Are you actually measuring what you say you are measuring?
- ii. Is the evaluation reliable? Are the methods clear and repeatable by another researcher?
- iii. If you are using sampling in your evaluation, how is that sampling going to be undertaken?
- iv. Can you use a range of data collection methods to get a rounded picture?
- v. Have you considered and addressed the ethical issues raised by your evaluation?

10. How can the data be analysed?

- i. Have you designed your evaluation so as to keep the amount of data manageable?
- ii. What can and cannot be done with different sorts of quantitative data?
- iii. What are you seeking from the qualitative data; patterns, different conceptions, ideas for improvement or just a human story?

11. What are the issues in presenting the results of evaluation?

- i. What is it that you want the evaluation report to achieve?
- ii. How can your results be presented differently to meet the needs of different readers?
- iii. Can you present your results so as to be understood and appreciated by a lay reader?
- iv. How can the results be most helpful to you?

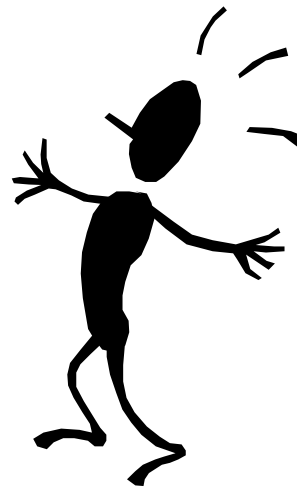


Another Tool to help design an evaluation

RUFDATA (Saunders 2000)

RUFDATA is an acronym and mnemonic for a set of questions which together can be used to help shape an evaluation. The questions are suggested by Murray Saunders as providing a framework for more scholarly practitioner evaluation. Saunders is particularly concerned to encourage and support a local evaluation culture amongst practitioners so his ideas are directly relevant to PDP practitioner research. His Questions are:

1. What are our **R**easons and Purposes for evaluation?
2. What will be the **U**ses of our evaluation?
3. What will be the **F**oci for our evaluations?
4. What will be our **D**ata and Evidence for our evaluations?
5. Who will be the **A**udience for our evaluations?
6. What will be the **T**iming for our evaluations?
7. Who should be the **A**gency conducting the evaluations?



Examples of Evaluation tools with Rationales

1. A Phenomenographic Evaluation of Student Attitudes to PDP

This evaluation across a number of institutions sought initially to look at ‘why many students do not engage effectively with Personal Development Planning?’. However this rather bald question has elements of presumption and blame within and underlying it. The issue was reframed as one of motivational and demotivational factors [including absences of motivation] for student engagement in PDP. The focus on motivation seemed reasonable in the light of previous experience and feedback, and placed a reasonable emphasis on student perceptions. However, this too contained elements of presumption as there may be other factors such as prior experience, learning environment, support systems, etc. which, though related to motivation might prove more germane. So, again there seems to be an assumption in the question – the assumptions might have been reasonable but the evidence was not in place to say this. So the question was reduced to:

- What factors influence student engagement in PDP?

Methodology

The wish to conduct a student-centred piece of research underpinned the project. A phenomenographic approach seemed reasonable, given the emphasis such an approach placed on the importance of the student’s voice, experiences and specific situation. From a phenomenographic perspective individuals make sense of the world as they experience it. Phenomenography suggests we shouldn’t distinguish between the individual and the world they live in because their life is the lived relationship. The world is a world experienced by the individual. Learning is seen to be about moving from simplistic ‘structures of awareness’ of the world to more complex conceptions. ‘Learning is viewed as being a change in the ways in which one is capable of experiencing some aspect of the world.’ (Booth 1997) Phenomenographers would therefore argue that learning is best understood by asking students to describe their experiences and behaviour. The resulting rich qualitative data can then be examined to identify clusters of conceptions, approaches and responses to the subject and used to examine the level of awareness of students in their relationships and approaches to the subject under study.

Prosser & Trigwell, (1999) provide a possible phenomenographic model within which questions about student learning can be asked. They broadly identify the areas of

- Learning and teaching context
- Student’s prior experience
- Student’s perception of the current situation
- Student’s approach to learning
- Students learning outcome

as being related and shaping the student’s overall experience of learning. This model can be applied to PDP and can be used to frame a method and to identify possible data gathering questions.

One possible problem with the methodology is that it implies a move through the questions from the specific experience towards broader statements about sense making. It also is usually applied to subjects of which the student has considerable experience. For PDP it might be rather hard to ask students to talk about their specific experience of PDP and only ask them at the end for a definition of PDP, partly because they may be doing a lot of PDP but not realise this until given a broad definition. They are likely to think of PDP at least in part in terms of the specific tool they use or have used for it. BUT it is important for students' conceptions to emerge about this rather than leading them – so PDP cannot be defined by the evaluator for the students but then neither can the evaluation just ask about the PDP tool example and then expect discussion naturally to broaden out to PDP. The method adopted was to ask them to define PDP and then, once they'd had a go, to ask questions about processes which have been put forward as part of the definition of PDP as well as more narrow questions about certain PDP tools. These questions were grouped together on each of the Trigwell and Prosser headings to allow students to talk about them together in such a way as made sense to the student.

Possibilities considered for the data collection included:

- Semi-structured focus group discussion – the advantage here was that it would help to promote thought amongst the group and individuals would spark ideas off each other. However the problem here was in disaggregating the data back into individual voices and the risk such a method runs of normalising responses.
- Semi-structured questionnaire – an invitation to write 500 words about their experience of PDP with perhaps a set of guidelines providing prompts. The difficulty here was knowing what prompts might be effective and the risk of overkill in the provision of prompts which lead the students into the same responses.
- Semi-structured interview – allows an individual response and tailored provision of prompts from an agreed list to ensure everything is covered but that unnecessary 'leading' by the documentation is less of a risk. The workload would be high for this given individual interviews and transcription.

Having run a pilot which used individual semi-structured interview and individual student 'creative writing', it was been decided that a more formal three stage structure for the data gathering was required. It proved difficult on the pilot to obtain a reasonable range of students by ad hoc methods and to get students to engage with 500 words of writing about PDP. The proposed 3 stage method aimed to get round this by purposive sampling, more formal structuring of the approach to PDP questionnaire, and the use of focus group discussion to prompt further reflection.

The first stage was to identify a purposive sample. This was not intended to be a representative sample of staff and students from across the institution. What it was expected to do was to represent the full range of possible responses that might come from staff and students at the institution. So it was important to insure there were direct entry and mature students, male and female, full and part time, vocational and non-vocational courses represented, degree and sub-degree, high achievers and low achievers, etc.

The second stage was to get the students to complete the short approaches to learning questionnaire and an approaches to PDP questionnaire. While the

approaches to learning questionnaire asked for quick indications of levels of agreement with statements, the approaches to PDP questionnaire asks for approximately 500 words. This together took approximately an hour and required only that a project evaluator was there and available to give non-directive clarification of what was required. By also asking students to undertake an approach to learning questionnaire it was possible to see if there was any relationship between the student's approach to learning generally and their particular approach to PDP.

The third stage involved breaking the students into small group [say 6 groups of 6 - if this hadn't already been the case for stages 1 and 2] and conducting a focus group discussion around the questions and responses given to the PDP questionnaire. Finally the group were invited to add to their initial responses on the PDP questionnaire in the light of the possibly more rounded conception they had formed on the basis of the discussion. This third stage also took about an hour.

It was obviously important for the project that the same questions were asked in a similar way at each participating institution

Student Approaches to PDP Questions

- Personal details [to check possible variables]
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Subject of study
 - Year
 - Part time/ full time
 - 18-21 or mature
 - Ethnicity
 - Educational background
 - Experienced grades
- Student's approach to PDP
 - How do you define Personal Development Planning? What is PDP about?
 - In light of your definition, do you currently engage in PDP?
 - If so, why and to what extent, if not, why not? [thoughts, feelings, issues - relate to other sections. **Key Question!**]
 - Do you engage in reflection, self-assessment, recording achievement, target setting, planning?
 - Do you use documents such as the Student Qualities Profile or Professional Development Portfolio?
- Student's perception of the situation
 - How were you introduced to PDP at University?
 - What departmental or institutional support do you receive for your engagement in PDP?
 - Are there situations when you are encouraged to engage in reflection, self-evaluation, recording achievement, target setting, planning?
 - How is your use of documents such as the Student Qualities Profile or Professional Development Portfolio supported?
 - What do you think or feel about the level of support provided?
 - How is PDP valued by your department/institution?
 - What barriers do you see to engagement in PDP?
- Student's prior experience of personal development planning [PDP]
 - Have you experience of engaging in PDP before coming to University?

- Did you encounter tools or situations when you engaged in or were encouraged to engage in reflection, self-assessment, recording achievement, target setting and planning?
- Have you used the National Record of Achievement, Progress File or Common/Key skills profiles?
- Student's perceived outcomes for PDP
 - What do you see as being the main outcomes or outputs of engagement in PDP? [What is PDP for?]
 - Is PDP useful for you?
 - Why might it be worthwhile to engage in PDP?
 - For whom is PDP most/least useful?

Staff Approaches to PDP Questionnaire

Staff were asked to go through the same process to get at their approach to PDP as well as their perceptions of their students' approach to PDP. They were given an approaches to teaching questionnaire and a slightly amended approaches to PDP questionnaire, to which additions could be made after a focus group discussion among themselves.

Amended questions for staff:

- Personal details [to check possible variables]
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Subject
 - Experience
 - Part time/ full time
 - Ethnicity
 - Educational background
- Staff approach to PDP
 - How do you define Personal Development Planning? What is PDP about? [Ask this set first then provide other questions & definitions?!]
 - In light of your definition, do you currently engage in PDP?
 - If so, why and to what extent, if not, why not? [thoughts, feelings, issues - relate to other sections. **Key Question!**]
 - Do you engage in reflection, self-assessment, recording achievement, target setting, planning?
 - Do you use documents for annual appraisal or review and development?
- Staff's perception of the situation
 - How were you introduced to PDP at your University?
 - What departmental or institutional support do you receive for your engagement in PDP?
 - Are there situations when you are encouraged to engage in reflection, self-evaluation, recording achievement, target setting, planning?
 - How is your use of professional development or appraisal documentation supported?
 - What do you think or feel about the level of support provided?
 - How is PDP valued by your department/institution?
 - What barriers do you see to engagement in PDP?

- Staff's prior experience of personal development planning [PDP]
 - Have you experience of engaging in PDP before coming to this University?
 - Did you encounter tools or situations when you engaged in or were encouraged to engage in reflection, self-assessment, recording achievement, target setting and planning?
 - Have you used other appraisal or CPD tools, the National Record of Achievement, Progress File or Common/Key skills profiles?

- Staff's perceived outcomes for PDP
 - What do you see as being the main outcomes or outputs of engagement in PDP? [What is PDP for?]
 - Is PDP useful for you?
 - Why might it be worthwhile to engage in PDP?
 - For whom is PDP most/least useful?

- Staff and student PDP
 - To what extent do your students engage in PDP?
 - How do you, your department and your institution support and value student engagement in PDP?
 - Have your students had prior experience of PDP?
 - What do you see as being the main outputs for students, and for you and your institution, from student engagement in PDP?

2. A Triangulated Institutional Evaluation of ePDP

This is an example of a worked through institutional evaluation of an ePDP pilot. The University employed an external evaluator to act as an advisor and lead report author working with an established internal evaluation team. The brief was to conduct an evaluation of an ePDP pilot to inform the possible roll-out of the system to the whole institution. The institution had identified that any institutional PDP system should:

- Be a formative, student-centred process
- Be used developmentally by students with tutor guidance
- Be integrated into the whole of the student experience at the university and include academic, personal, career, professional skills inputs.
- Produce outputs useful for students and their future employers

The specific purpose set for the evaluation was to:

- identify the advantages and disadvantages of using the ePDP system from both a staff and student perspective
- explore and report on any issues on scalability for cross-University use.
- make recommendations on staff and student training needs
- draw attention to any other matters that may effect a University wide implementation.

The evaluation team opted to combine three forms of data to get a rounded view of the pilot:

1. Usage information
2. Questionnaire data
3. Focus Group interviews

1. Usage Information

Usage information was generated by the system itself as a normal part of its operation. So much of the evidence here was taken from already existing records. These allowed the evaluation team to see how many staff and students were using the system and how often. This could inform judgements about how well the system was currently being used and perhaps to extrapolate whether staff and students were therefore finding it useful.

2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as a way of gathering data from as many users as possible in a form that would allow it to be analysed relatively quickly statistically. The text of the questionnaire is produced in full below and a number of features and issues should be noted:

- The introduction explains its purpose and that information will be used anonymously.
- The personal data collected allows for analysis of the findings by age, gender, subject discipline, ethnicity, level of study and current grade.

Many of these were important to an institution with a widening participation agenda.

- Questions 1-3 ask about prior experience of PDP and e-systems
- Questions 4-13 ask about 'usefulness of the system' in terms of supporting the key activities associated with PDP
- Questions 14-21 and 31-32 are about whether users were happy with the level of support the institution is offering for student engagement with the system
- Questions 22-30 are about the perceived usability of the system
- Questions 33-43 and 45-47 are about the different facilities offered by the ePDP system itself
- Questions 48-52 address some of the key claimed benefits for engaging in PDP
- Open questions are asked at the end to capture any key points the respondent wants to raise. This proved important because the 'human voice' in these comments often served to illustrate the statistical findings.

The questionnaire was kept to within 2 pages of text. However this may still have been rather long. It is questionable whether the evaluation report could possibly have dealt with all the information gathered by a questionnaire with over 50 questions. Nevertheless there was a logic to the inclusion of all the questions here.

The Questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in this evaluation. This evaluation is led externally and is intended to collect the views of staff and students on the use of ePDP. The information given in this questionnaire will be used anonymously in the evaluation report to inform University decisions on the funding and development of the ePDP project so it is important that it captures your views effectively. Please mark the box you feel best represents your reaction to each of the statements.

If you feel there is something important you have to say about ePDP which is not captured by the questionnaire please feel free to add further comments at the end.

Student Number:		Subject:	
Department:		Age: (please circle one)	17-21, 21-24, 25+
Gender: (please circle one)	Male Female	Ethnicity:	
Level of Study: (please circle one)	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd Year, Masters Other: (please specify)	What is your current average mark?	

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I have enough IT skills to use ePDP effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I have previously used a record of achievement or other tool for recording, reflecting and planning my personal, professional or academic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I have found such processes of recording, reflecting and planning useful in the past	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	ePDP is useful for reflection on my learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	ePDP is useful for identifying my strengths and weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	ePDP is useful for identifying my transferable skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	ePDP is useful for recording my achievements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	ePDP is useful for planning my way forward	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	ePDP is useful for target setting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	ePDP is useful for supporting learning in my subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	ePDP is useful for supporting my professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	ePDP is useful for my personal development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	ePDP is useful for organising discussion with my personal tutor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	When I first used ePDP, it was clear to me what to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	I like the design and 'look' of ePDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	I found the introduction to ePDP clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	On-line support for ePDP is helpful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	My use of ePDP is supported by my personal tutor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	My use of ePDP is supported by my lecturers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	ePDP should be formally assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	Use of ePDP should be optional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	I am making extensive use of ePDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	ePDP is simple and easy to use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	It is easy to input my existing achievements into ePDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	My experiences easily fit the ePDP format	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	I have appropriate time to use ePDP effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	Making use of ePDP is not a high priority for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28	I would prefer a paper-based portfolio system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	It is easy to attach appropriate documents and files to my records in ePDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30	I find ePDP clear and straightforward	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31	I would like more face-to-face support for my use of ePDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32	I would like more on-line support for my use of ePDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33	The hints facility on ePDP was helpful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
34	The help facility on ePDP was clear and effective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35	It is easy to provide feedback on my experience of using ePDP to the developers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36	I have found ePDP useful for recording my thoughts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37	I have found ePDP useful for recording my experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38	I Have found ePDP useful for recording my abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39	I have found ePDP useful for recording meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40	I have found ePDP useful for recording my action plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41	I have found ePDP useful for recording my achievements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42	I found the different stages of producing an input useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43	I have found the sharing facility on ePDP useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44	I would have liked other input fields [such as.....(please specify below)]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45	I will use ePDP to generate my CV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46	I will use ePDP to produce a weblog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47	I will use ePDP to produce a webfolio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
48	Using ePDP will help me learn better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49	Using ePDP will help me present myself better to possible employers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50	Using ePDP will make me a better professional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51	Using ePDP will develop my IT skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
52	Using ePDP is making me better at reflection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is the best thing about using ePDP?
What is the worst thing about ePDP?
What one key improvement would you suggest to ePDP?

3. Staff and student focus group questions

A variety of focus groups were established to gain more in-depth and human responses to the evaluation questions. The questions were slightly tailored for each group but were framed to address the same concerns. The meetings were established, run and written-up by a student member of the internal evaluation team. Again these began by the evaluator explaining the purpose of the evaluation to the group and the way the data would be used. The groups were kept to manageable proportions, 8 individuals or less, and these questions were used as prompts.

Focus Group introduction and Questions

'This focus group is being held as part of the evaluation of the ePDP pilot. It has been designed by an evaluation team led by an external consultant. The purpose is to obtain the views of students and staff on the benefits and limitations of the piloted version of ePDP both as a means of making decisions on future funding of the project and to provide the ePDP designers with useful developmental feedback. We would like to stress that this evaluation is about ePDP and we would encourage you to be as candid as possible in your responses.

The focus group will be taped and will be written up but your anonymity will be respected. Quotations will be used but with no names or identifying information. If, in the course of discussion of the questions below, we can get a generally accepted view then great but we don't want this at the expense of important individual views.

We will ask you a few broad questions and encourage you to discuss these with the minimum of interruption and direction from us.'

Staff just starting to use/recently introduced to ePDP

- How did you hear of ePDP
- What has made you interested in wanting to use ePDP
- How do you think you may use ePDP with your students
- Do you have any concerns over using ePDP
- How much support do you think you will need
- Have you used reflective practices before with your students
- When are you planning on starting to use ePDP

Staff already using ePDP with their students

- When did you start using ePDP with your students
- How did you implement ePDP into your course
- What do you think helped with implementing ePDP
- What areas of ePDP are you using
- Were there any barriers
- What level of support did you receive
- What key improvements would you like to see
- Do you still have any concerns with ePDP

Students just starting to use/recently introduced to ePDP

- How did you hear of ePDP
- Is it compulsory to use ePDP
- What are your opinions on being introduced to ePDP
- Do you have any concerns over using ePDP
- How much support do you think you will need
- Have you used reflective practices before
- What are your initial impressions of ePDP
- Which parts of ePDP do you think you will find most useful
- Do you think you will use ePDP outside of your course
- Are there any areas you wish were different

Students using ePDP for a number of months

- When did you start using ePDP
- How were you introduced to ePDP
- What areas of ePDP are you using
- How has using ePDP helped you (benefited you)
- Were there any barriers to you using ePDP
- What level of support did you receive
- Are you using ePDP outside of your course
- What key improvements would you like to see
- Do you still have any concerns with ePDP

3. ESECT self-efficacy questionnaire by Prof. Peter Knight & Prof. Mantz Yorke

[From the HE Academy website]

'Self-efficacy tools provide an indication of the extent to which students believe that they 'can make a difference' in situations that confront them in higher education and life more generally. This is known as self-efficacy.

The only tool of this sort currently available is one designed for the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team by Professors Peter Knight and Mantz Yorke. It is a questionnaire to aid reflection on self-efficacy and is described below.

A component of employability is self-belief that one can affect situations through one's actions. The underlying principle of the self-efficacy approach is that feedback to students should seek to enhance this.

Evidence from pilot work indicates that there is a fairly sizeable minority of students whose self-efficacy could possibly be enhanced. Well-designed curricula can help students, in general, to show greater self-efficacy.

The self-efficacy questionnaire (SEQ) can be used as an individually-focused activity, with the intention of developing individual students' self-knowledge. It can also be used as a group instrument for the same purposes, though in this case the feedback will be general rather than individually-focused. Since care needs to be taken with the ethical issues that bear on any questionnaire activity. For this reason, the use of the questionnaire as a group activity (in which responses can be anonymous) may be preferred.'

Editors note: The tool can also be used to evaluate the impact of PDP activities on self-efficacy and therefore, by proxy, on employability. Pre and Post testing would be the most appropriate use to measure the impact of a PDP-related intervention. However the scores from pilot work with this questionnaire are available on the HE Academy website and this could allow the use of one-off measurement and its comparison to such benchmark data.

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/2313.htm> accessed 10th May 2006

Survey of views about academic work and life in general

As part of a study of the impact of higher education on students, we are trying to relate the ways in which they think about their academic work to their general beliefs about life. This involves asking you and other students to complete the following short questionnaire. We would be very grateful if you would spend a few minutes of your time in completing this questionnaire as accurately as you can.

Please note that the questionnaire is anonymous.

In the table below please . . . tick the ☉☉ column if you **disagree** with the statement
 tick the ☉ (?) column if you **tend to disagree** with the statement
 tick the ☐ (?) column if you **tend to agree** with the statement
 tick the ☐☐ column if you **agree** with the statement

Item	☐☐	☐ (?)	☉ (?)	☉☉
1. The academic tasks I am set motivate me to put in quite a lot of effort.	1	2	3	4
2. In life in general, I am stimulated by the challenge of difficult problems.	1	2	3	4
3. Chance will probably be influential in what I achieve in employment.	1	2	3	4
4. The amount of work I put into my studies is reflected in my grades.	1	2	3	4
5. No matter what kind of person someone is, it is always possible for them to change significantly.	1	2	3	4
6. I don't like situations in which I, rather than others, am responsible for what happens.	1	2	3	4
7. I see employment as a good opportunity to learn new things.	1	2	3	4
8. I don't let other people determine the way I tackle what I do outside higher education.	1	2	3	4
9. I have a fair amount of freedom as regards the way in which I tackle my academic work.	1	2	3	4
10. The tasks that people outside higher education expect me to undertake usually energise me to work hard at them.	1	2	3	4
11. I find that academic work doesn't stretch me intellectually.	1	2	3	4
12. Luck doesn't play much of a part in what I achieve academically.	1	2	3	4
13. In the things I do outside higher education, I find that there is not much of a connection between what I achieve and the effort I put in.	1	2	3	4
14. An individual can't change their intelligence by much.	1	2	3	4
15. As a student, I like learning situations in which I, rather than the teaching staff, can shape the work to be done.	1	2	3	4
16. Higher education doesn't give me much of an opportunity to develop new skills.	1	2	3	4
17. My academic work is determined by what the teaching staff tell me I ought to do.	1	2	3	4
18. Outside higher education, I have a fair bit of scope to influence the way in which tasks are tackled.	1	2	3	4

19. What age were you when you started on this degree programme? Please tick the appropriate box.

Under 21	1	21-25	2	26-31	3	Over 31	4
----------	---	-------	---	-------	---	---------	---

20. Are you male or female? Please tick the appropriate box.

Male	1
------	---

Female	2
--------	---

21. What is your current year of study? Please enter 1, 2, etc or Final in the box, as appropriate.

22. Which of the following categories A, B, C, D, E **most closely describes** the programme you are studying?

- A. Mainly modelled on the natural sciences and with little applied/vocational work (e.g. pure mathematics, theoretical physics)
- B. Mainly modelled on the natural sciences and with much applied/vocational work (e.g. engineering)
- C. Mainly modelled on arts, humanities or social sciences and with little applied/vocational work (e.g. English literature, fine art)
- D. Mainly modelled on arts, humanities or social sciences and with much applied/vocational work (e.g. teacher education, social work)
- E. Some combination of the above in which none of A, B, C, D predominates

Please write the appropriate letter here

23. Is your programme a 'sandwich' course? Please tick as appropriate

Yes	1
-----	---

No	2
----	---

24. It is said that higher education should develop students' employability. What, if anything, does 'employability' mean to you?

25. What has been developed in you, **outside the education system**, that will probably assist your employment chances in the *graduate* labour market? Please list up to three things.

26. **(First year students only)** What do you hope your undergraduate programme **will do** to support your employability in a graduate job? Please list up to three things.

27. **(Students in 2nd and subsequent years only)** What, if anything, has your undergraduate programme **already done** to help you to become an employable graduate? Please list up to three things.

4. A tool to measure employability: Leeds University Alumni Survey

[from the HE Academy website]

'This tool is a graduate follow-up survey questionnaire that was developed by the University of Leeds Careers Service. It was used with several departments that wished to follow-up graduates who had left the university 2-4 years previously.

The questionnaire aimed to gather information about graduates' perceptions of their career development and what within 'the university experience' had been of most benefit to them in developing their careers after graduation. At the time of the questionnaire development, the university was also seeking to gain information on specific generic skills development and use within the workplace.

The questionnaire has now been provided for others to use, via the HE Academy website, courtesy of the University of Leeds.

It will require some customisation by those who would wish to use it in their institutions or subject communities.'

Editors notes: This tool obviously has use in relation to PDP and employability and can be used in evaluations in a number of ways. It could be used long-term as part of a longitudinal study of the impact of PDP on students as they move through higher education and into employment. However it could be used immediately to help identify what students, looking back on their university studies from employment, think was the most important aspect of their higher Education experience for employability. Were key skills important and, if so, which ones? Was it more about reflection and personal development, professional development, learning to learn or extra-curricula experience? This in turn can then be used both to justify those elements of PDP that have been valued by alumni and to inform the development of further appropriate PDP approaches and activities.

At 8 pages the questionnaire is rather long and its size might well affect response rates and make it difficult to analyse and use the full range of data gathered. It would certainly be worthwhile customising and cutting the questionnaire to focus on the particular issues appropriate to your setting. For example it would be appropriate to use the skill set from your own Progress File.

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/2414.htm> accessed 10th May 2006



Alumni Survey - Graduates of 200...

Department of

This survey is one means by which we are trying to keep in touch with our alumni during their later careers. By completing this questionnaire you will help us understand better the links between curriculum, learning experiences and career outcomes. We will draw on this information when reviewing our teaching and support for future students.

We appreciate the time you give to helping us with this exercise. All responses will, of course, be treated in confidence. The identifying number will only be used to check on responses and reminders. We are enclosing a reply paid envelope.

Unless otherwise indicated, please respond to questions by putting a ring round the number corresponding to your answer, like this f.

1a Please give the title of the programme on which you were enrolled at the University of Leeds, and indicate whether you attended full-time, part-time or in sandwich mode.

Programme title (eg BAHons (Music)):

Full-time 1
 Part-time 2
 Sandwich mode..... 3

1b What was your degree classification?

Honours Class 1 1
 Honours Class 2(i) 2
 Honours Class 2(ii) 3
 Honours Class 3 4
 Pass degree 5

2 The following list refers to factors which may have influenced your decision to enrol on your Leeds degree programme. Please read through the list and tell us—in column (a)—which of these was the ONE main factor that influenced your choice. What other factors (if any) influenced your choice—column (b)?

	a) main factor	b) other factors
I was advised to do so by a careers teacher or adviser	1	1
It appeared an interesting programme	2	2
The programme seemed to be very good academically	3	3
It suited my prior education and experience	4	4
I was very interested in the overall field	5	5
I wanted the opportunity to study a Combined Honours programme	6	6
I wanted to expand my general knowledge	7	7
I expected it would lead to an interesting job after graduation	8	8
Studying this subject would help me to bring about changes in society	9	9
Already committed to an occupation and I needed this degree for career progression	0	0
I thought Leeds would be a nice city and a good place to live	10	10
The University seemed to welcome mature students	20	20

The University has a good reputation	30	30
I was offered a place through the UCAS clearing system	40	40
Other factor, if not listed above (<i>please write in</i>)	50	
Other factors (<i>please write in</i>)		60

3 Please show the *highest qualification* you held when you started your course at the University

No formal educational qualification	1
GCSEs, GCE O-levels, or equivalent	2
GCE A-levels, or equivalent	3
ONC/OND, BTEC national certificates and diplomas, or equivalent	4
HNC/HND, BTEC higher national certificates and diplomas, or equivalent	5
Qualification above GCE A-level, or equivalent	6
Completion of an adult Access Course to Higher Education	7
Other qualification(s) (<i>please write in</i>)	8

4a How important in your long-term career strategy is each of the following? Please answer for each statement.

	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important	No opinion
Getting an interesting job	1	2	3	4
Improving my social status	1	2	3	4
Continuing to use my chosen discipline	1	2	3	4
Achieving a very good standard of living	1	2	3	4
Supporting a family	1	2	3	4
Having secure employment	1	2	3	4
Being my own boss	1	2	3	4

4b Here are a number of statements about long-term career plans. For each one, would you please say whether it is very important, fairly important or not very important to you.

	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important	No opinion
Opportunity to work with people	1	2	3	4
High salary	1	2	3	4
Plenty of leisure time	1	2	3	4
High job security	1	2	3	4
Opportunity to help others	1	2	3	4
High prestige and social status	1	2	3	4
Opportunity for continuing professional development	1	2	3	4
Flexible working hours	1	2	3	4
The opportunity to be creative and original	1	2	3	4
Relative freedom from supervision by others	1	2	3	4
The chance to exercise leadership	1	2	3	4
Work which is continually challenging	1	2	3	4

5 What is your current employment status?

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Full-time employee | 1 | Unemployed | 7 |
| Part-time employee | 2 | Unpaid voluntary work | 8 |
| Self employed | 3 | <i>Not currently seeking employment because of</i> | |
| In full-time study or training | 4 | Ill health | 9 |
| Unemployed but with a paid job arranged | 5 | Family responsibilities | 0 |
| Unemployed but with further study arranged..... | 6 | Other (<i>write in</i>) | |
-

6 Nature of present job — if currently unemployed or in full-time study, please go to question 10.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>A What is your current job?
<i>(Please be specific, eg assistant manager, trainee chartered accountant, production engineer, sales assistant etc.)</i></p> <p>_____</p> | <p>b When did you start it?</p> <p><i>Start date (month/year):</i></p> <p>_____</p> | <p>c Is your present job</p> <p>Temporary ?
<i>(a contract for 3 months or less)</i> 1</p> <p>Fixed Term?
<i>(a contract for more than 3 months)....</i> 2</p> <p>Permanent? 3</p> |
|---|--|--|
-

7 Do you feel that you are over-qualified or under-qualified for the job you currently have?

- Over qualified 1
 Qualification about right 2
 Under qualified 3
 Uncertain 4

8 How likely is it that this type of work will form your long term career?

- Very likely 1) go to Q.10
 Fairly likely 2) "
 Not very likely 3) go to Q.9
 Don't know 4)

9 If not very likely (Q.8), what kind of work would you prefer to do in the long term? (*please write in*)

10 Please list any other full-time paid jobs you have had since completing your studies, starting with the most recent.

JOB TITLE	DATES	
	From	To

11 Here are a number of opportunities provided by jobs. Taking your current (or most recent) job, does/did it provide each of these opportunities to a great extent, somewhat or only a little?

	A great extent	Somewhat	A little/not at all	No opinion/not relevant
A high degree of work autonomy	1	2	3	4
Opportunity to use initiative	1	2	3	4
A lot of responsibility	1	2	3	4
Opportunity for professional development	1	2	3	4
A strong possibility of rapid promotion	1	2	3	4
The opportunity to be creative and original	1	2	3	4
The chance to exercise leadership	1	2	3	4
Work which is continually challenging	1	2	3	4
Supervising other staff	1	2	3	4
Work within clearly defined rules and regulations	1	2	3	4
Communicating with clients/customers	1	2	3	4

12 In relation to current (or most recent) job requirements, do you now feel that your degree course gave you sufficient opportunity to develop your skills in each of the following areas:

	A great extent	Somewhat	A little/not at all	No opinion/not relevant
Dealing with people	1	2	3	4
Writing reports	1	2	3	4
Interpreting statistical data	1	2	3	4
Understanding financial matters	1	2	3	4
Using Information Technology/computers	1	2	3	4
Oral presentation skills	1	2	3	4
Awareness of cross-cultural issues	1	2	3	4

13 How satisfied were you with the following facilities and services at the University of Leeds?

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not very satisfied	No opinion/not relevant
Classroom teaching accommodation	1	2	3	4
Practical work teaching accommodation	1	2	3	4
Catering and rest-break facilities	1	2	3	4
Necessary IT/computer facilities	1	2	3	4
Library facilities	1	2	3	4
Availability of essential reading materials	1	2	3	4
Academic guidance by tutors	1	2	3	4
Career guidance services	1	2	3	4
Specialist counselling services	1	2	3	4
Access Fund or other emergency financial help	1	2	3	4
Child care facilities	1	2	3	4
Recreational and sports facilities	1	2	3	4
University's residential accommodation	1	2	3	4
Any other facilities you wish to comment on (please write in, and rate)	1	2	3	4

15 Increasingly employers are interested in graduates with general as well as specialist skills. Below is a list of such general skills.

- a How highly do you rate your own ability in respect of each of these skills?
and
b How do you rate the contribution of your degree programme to the development of these skills?

	a) Your own ability			b) Degree programme contribution		
	Very high	Fairly high	Not very high	Very high	Fairly high	Not very high
The ability to communicate clearly in speech	1	2	3	4	5	6
The ability to communicate clearly in writing	1	2	3	4	5	6
The ability to analyse and interpret quantitative data	1	2	3	4	5	6
The ability to apply what has been learned in a wider context	1	2	3	4	5	6
General creative and imaginative powers	1	2	3	4	5	6
Problem-solving strategies and skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Independence of viewpoint and judgement	1	2	3	4	5	6
Critical self-awareness	1	2	3	4	5	6

Questions 16-20 relate to a range of general communication, management and personal skills that are required (to some extent at least) in most jobs, and in further study or training. Such skills may also facilitate continuing learning, employability and effective career planning.

16 How important are the following communication skills in your current/most recent job (or further study), and to what extent did your degree programme enhance each of these skills?

	How important are the following in your job?			To what extent did your degree programme enhance these skills?		
	Very	Fairly	Not Very	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not much
<i>Communication</i>						
Adopting a positive and helpful manner	1	2	3	1	2	3
.....						
Pitching communications at the appropriate level for recipients	1	2	3	1	2	3
Giving information clearly and concisely	1	2	3	1	2	3
.....						
Putting forward a point of view persuasively	1	2	3	1	2	3
Listening effectively	1	2	3	1	2	3
Selecting the most appropriate and effective method of communication	1	2	3	1	2	3
.....						
Giving a formal presentation to a group	1	2	3	1	2	3
Seeking opinions and appreciating others' views	1	2	3	1	2	3

Giving feedback and constructive criticism	1	2	3	1	2	3
.....						
Accepting feedback and constructive criticism	1	2	3	1	2	3
Any other related skills (<i>please write in and rate</i>)						
	1	2	3	1	2	3

26 Since graduating from the University of Leeds, have you gained, or are you studying for further qualifications?

No 1
 Yes 2

26a If so, please indicate which:

	Studying for	Achieved
Postgraduate Diploma	1	2
Master's degree	3	4
MPhil/PhD	5	6
Professional qualification	7	8
PGCE	9	0
Other (<i>please write in</i>)	X	V

26b Please write in the subject of your further study

27 Have you received any training for your current job from your employer?

Not working for an employer ... 1
 No, none 2
 Yes, 3
 (*write in subjects, eg management training*)

27a If Yes to Q.27, how was the training provided?

on-the-job training, with supervision 1
 formal, one-off training sessions 2
 systematic, longer training programme 3

The final section of the questionnaire contains some general questions about your study at the University of Leeds

28a What were the most useful aspects of your study in relation to skills and abilities needed within the workplace?

28b Which skills (if any) gained during your studies would you now like to develop further?

28c What were the least useful aspects of your study in relation to skills and abilities needed within the workplace?

28d What new skills are you likely to have to acquire in the short to medium term (e.g. within the next 5 years)?

29 Are there any further comments you would like to make about your time at the University of Leeds?

Thank you for your help in returning this completed questionnaire to the University of Leeds

5. A tool to help evaluate ePDP systems: Getting what you want (Implementing Personal Development Planning through e-portfolio)

The term portfolio as used in the context of UK Higher Education has a range of meanings. Here we are using it to describe a collection (or archive) of reflective writing and associated evidence, which documents learning and which a learner may draw upon to represent her/his learning and achievements, and on the basis of which may plan and set targets. A portfolio in this sense therefore encompasses the concept of records associated with personal development planning (PDP), including personal development records (PDRs) that may contribute to the HE Progress File (Dearing, 1997)³, and extends beyond that, to incorporate artefacts which may evidence claims made in PDRs. Many institutions are choosing to implement PDP (and to encourage learners to manage their PDRs) through electronic means, often linking this to the term e-portfolio.

This introductory paper has been developed to help Higher Education institutions to make informed choices about e-portfolio systems, which they may wish to consider implementing, to support learners in personal development planning processes. It provides a generic summary of things to think about, questions to ask, and people to talk to. This summary will be supplemented by web-based guidance materials for specific audiences, derived from specific stakeholder perspectives⁴, including institutional and technical managers (e.g. academic registrars, MIS managers), practitioners who support learners (e.g. personal and academic tutors), and students. The web-based guidance for specific audiences will be available from late September, 2005, and the URL will be published at that time via the CRA website.

This paper draws on an investigative survey of current e-portfolio and related systems⁵ in the UK, which was funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). The full report, *Developing and Implementing a Methodology for reviewing e-portfolio products* can be found at the MLEs programme Support Project web site http://www.jisc.ac.uk/project_0103_support.html and at: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/epfr.doc.

In addition, an earlier complementary paper⁶ was concerned to help IT managers and PDP developers make informed choices that give the best opportunity of:

- ensuring that systems are fit for purpose and avoiding the provision of services that prove of little use or value to the student community;
- avoiding the pitfalls that sometimes accompany the implementation of IT where this is explicitly concerned to support student learning and development.

The Context

The use of portfolios for the collection and management of assessment evidence has been a feature of vocational and professional programmes for a number of years.⁷ The production of this report is however, particularly timely given:

1. the Higher Education sector-agreed implementation date for Personal Development Planning (by 2005/6 academic year). There appears an increasing though by no means universal move towards 'e' implementation in respect of PDP, a development reflecting the increasing use of IT-based learning environments, study off-campus, the remorseless pressure on staff resources, and the increasing readiness of many students and an increasing number of staff to engage with the technology;

³ Dearing, R (1997) Dearing, R (1997) Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (The Dearing Report) <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/> (accessed 30/07/05).

⁴ It is possible that this generic guidance may be modified in the light of the specific guidance areas.

⁵ The word 'systems' as used here encompasses not only e-portfolio software applications (products) but also processes to support learners, regardless of whether these are by electronic or human intervention.

⁶ This can be found at: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/2258.htm>

⁷ For an earlier example of the development of Portfolios for assessment in respect of vocational competence see <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/nvq/what.shtml>.

2. the Report of the Scoping Group on Measuring, and Recording Student Achievement in HE ('the Burgess Report' 2004)⁸, which envisaged the possibility of a personal electronic portfolio for all HE students in the medium term. Selected evidence from such an e-portfolio could be presented for a range of purposes and in a range of different formats;
3. the recently published HEFCE e-learning strategy⁹ emphasises the encouragement of 'e-based systems of describing learning achievement and personal development planning (PDP)' within its Joint Implementation Plan.
4. beyond HE the DfES e-Strategy¹⁰ emphasises that:
'We will encourage every institution to offer a personal online learning space to store coursework, course resources, results and achievements. We will work towards developing a personal identifier for each learner, so that organizations can support an individual's progression more effectively. Together, these facilities will become an electronic portfolio, making it simpler for learners to build their record of achievement throughout their lifelong learning.' (para10, page 5)

Earlier UK thinking¹¹ used the term e-portfolio to describe the presentational aspect and 'Learner Profile' to describe the archive on which the presentational portfolio was built. Here a developed, more inclusive position is taken, with the recommendation that attention can profitably be given to four contexts of e-portfolio usage. These are concerned respectively with:

- a. supporting formal learning;
- b. supporting overall development, (encompassing personal and career areas as well as educational ones, and learning/experience derived from less formal contexts).^{12 13}
- c. presentation/showcasing for progression;
- d. formal summative assessment.¹⁴

These are most appropriately thought about as types of usage or types of scenario of use, with a fully-fledged e-portfolio system ideally covering many or all of the different uses. This categorisation offers greater definition in respect of the audience(s) for the presentational aspects and also emphasises the learner themselves as one such audience.

Key Messages from the Survey

The study developed a mapping template and explored a sample of twelve e-portfolio products which exemplify the range of existing UK systems, in terms of target learner communities, purposes and functionalities and commercial or non-commercial basis. It reported that:

- most e-portfolio products have been developed for a particular age or stage of learning rather than to support lifelong learning;
- the main purpose of most was to support personal development planning type practice, usually alongside a tutorial programme¹⁵, or with facility for mentor feedback;

⁸ Available at: <http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/measuringachievement.pdf>

⁹ See http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_12/05_12.doc

¹⁰ See www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/e-strategy. (Accessed 20/03/05). While the focus here is upon developments in England, parallel work is under way elsewhere.

¹¹ See Grant S, Rees Jones P and Ward R (2003): *Mapping Personal Developments to IMS LIP: Consultation Document*, JISC, CRA and CETIS: available from http://www.recordingachievement.org/downloads/UK_LP1_1B_Final.pdf

¹² Helpfully, similar categorisations are presented in a report to Becta by Strivens et al 'Current e-portfolio developments in the 14-19, Adult and Lifelong Learning Sectors' (2005), and in a paper reviewing emerging practice in Europe developed to facilitate discussion at the 2004 e-portfolio conference held in La Rochelle (Rees Jones P, (ed) 2004).

¹³ A fifth purpose, to support individual inclusion within more differentiated learner environments, might also be added. See (<http://www.inst.co.uk/clients/jisc/e-portfoliodef.html>) for a consideration of criteria in terms of function, information management and use, which might be considered to be central to e-portfolio systems and support.

¹⁴ There has been an emerging emphasis upon the use of ICT in the assessment process in formal learning/training contexts, including the use of use of electronic portfolios with a greater use of evidence in digital format, such as in video, images or sound, which may also increase the opportunity for more flexible assessment processes (see e.g. <http://www.pgce.soton.ac.uk/ict/eps/>). We do not define this as 'showcasing' as the learner may have little or no say in the elements that are required for such assessment.

- two products were more appropriately described as assessment management tools, and three provided a means for creating presentational portfolios;¹⁶
- all products allowed learners to create and edit text;
- most supported file upload and/or linked files;
- about half the products stated their privacy policy on site;
- similarly, about half allowed the learner to select person(s) to share either selected parts (or all) of their e-portfolio;
- very few products supported learner controlled screen display preference settings. Some are planning development in this area;
- most product developers reported that ‘conformance with e-learning standards was under development’, although none yet supported transfer of learner information to another e-portfolio product.

Transferable Benefits: an agenda for discussion and decision making.

A significant transferable outcome of the study was the analytical tool itself, with wider potential uses, including to:

- enable informed conversations between practitioners, IT experts and managers about which functionalities may be important to effectively support learners in their own context,
- inform developers and vendors of functionality which user communities are likely to require;
- catalyse developers to develop systems accordingly.

Here we have suggested some questions, based on the mapping template¹⁷, which readers may wish to ask about systems to more effectively support learners in their own context. **We suggest that the questions may appropriately be used as an aid to conversation with colleagues, including institutional and technical managers, practitioners who support learners, and with learners¹⁸.** Remember that this is not a categorical list, but some first thoughts to help you decide what the key points are for you.

Aspects/functionalities/features/ for consideration	Key points for us: e.g. what are the potential benefits and importance of this aspect to effectively support our learners?
1) Target learners and e-portfolio purpose(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are our target learners? • What is their stage/episode of education or employment? • How does this link with previous stages of their learning? • How might this link with their next stages of learning? 	
What do we see as the main purpose(s) of e-portfolio for our learners? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to support formal learning/learning to learn • to support overall development (including personal and career areas, and experience/learning from less formal contexts) 	

¹⁵ Tutorial support was usually ‘face to face’, hence, a ‘system’ encompassed electronic and human delivery.

¹⁶ However, these purposes overlap and some systems support more than one purpose.

¹⁷ The template is itself evolving in response to use and feedback, and will be revised further in the months ahead. It is planned to develop it as a web resource, with additional guidance about how terms within it are used, as we recognise that vocabularies and meanings will vary among different users

¹⁸ With this in mind, we have addressed the questions to ‘we/our’, as though readers are asking colleagues and themselves together. The question tool may also be used by an individual as a personal prompt, in which situation, a reader may prefer to read it as though addressed to ‘I/my’.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to support formative assessment, • to provide an assessment management tool, for formal summative assessment • to create a presentational portfolio/showcasing for progression • to support transition between different learning environments • to support personalisation, effective choices and pathways • Other purposes? 	
<p>2) What guidance to support learner is important in our context to include online or alongside? (You might wish to note your preference for 'online' or 'alongside' each relevant element).</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance to learner on the purpose(s) of the system • Guidance to learner on how to use the system • A tutorial programme alongside to support the e-portfolio process • On-line tutor/mentor support for feedback to learner • Diagnostic tools <p>Other ?</p>	
<p>3) Information managed: What types of information are/will be owned and managed by a learner?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal development records (PDRs) e.g. statements of interests, achievements; claims of progress, skills, competency; goals, plans • Evidence, e.g. qualifications, certificates, licences, other digital files (audio, video, picture) • Reflections • CV • Other? 	
<p>4) Information owned and managed by Institution/ Organisation</p>	
<p>Developing transcript - can/will a learner be able to view progress/assessed achievements (marks, grades) to evidence formal progress during a period of study?</p>	
<p>Transcript –can/will a learner be able to view and link to transcript as authenticated evidence of achievement after period of study?</p>	
<p>How will security and authentication of transcript information be assured and maintained?</p>	
<p>How will the e-portfolio interoperate with our existing VLE? MLE? MIS?</p>	
<p>Other considerations?</p>	
<p>5) Managing information: How will learners manage information? What editing rights and facilities do/will learners need?</p>	

<p>; e.g. should a learner have rights/facilities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enter, edit and save text ? (e.g. personal development records) • upload files as evidence of learning/competency etc? (these might be text, images, audio, video) • hyperlink to files as evidence? (text, audio etc) • export files? • create his/her own web page templates? • see all their data and a list of uploaded and linked files? • view/link to his/ her developing transcript/awarding body record? • Other considerations? 	
<p>6) Legal aspects</p>	
<p>Privacy and ownership/ stewardship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will be the relevant data protection policy (DPP)? • Will learner be able to view the DPP within the e-portfolio system? • Who will have permission to view all or part of a learner's e-portfolio? • Who will set permissions for sharing information? (learner/Department/ School/ Faculty/Institution/ awarding body/company?) • How long may/must data be stored after learner leaves Institution /Organisation? What are the legal requirements of stewardship? • Other? 	
<p>Accessibility/usability issues which should be taken into consideration; e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can each learner select preference settings for screen display – font style, size, colours of font and background, which are stored and automatically applied at log-in? • accessibility via a keyboard (instead of a pointing device)? • Other considerations? 	
<p>7) Storage capacity and storage duration</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much space will be allocated to each learner's PD records and digital files? • How long will a learner's records be retained, so that learner may reflect back on progress between 'then' and 'now'? • Other considerations? 	
<p>8) What does the system need to conform to e-learning standards?</p>	
<p>How will the system interoperate with other systems, so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a learner can transfer his/her PD information from previous stage, and to next stage of learning/ organisation without re-keying information? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an organisation can transfer a learner's information from previous, and to next, stage of learning/ organisation without re-keying information? • Other considerations? 	
9) What other resources do we require to run alongside to assure effective learner support?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e.g. human resources, such as tutor support, IT support for learner and system, IT developer support for further development. • Other? 	
10) Evaluation	
<p>How might we evaluate efficacy, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • level of use by learners • impact on learners • impact on staff • Other ? 	

As ever in educational contexts, there is more than one approach to a particular question. An alternative, but complementary approach, is provided by Beetham (2005)¹⁹. Appendix 2 in her recent paper helpfully starts from the perspective of potential benefits of e-portfolio use to learners, and considers the functional requirements to support each of these benefits.

Additionally, it is essential that the system adopted is sufficiently flexible for functionalities to evolve as learners' support needs, and organisational requirements change. This might be appropriately addressed through development and use of web services, in support of, for example, the re-use of e-portfolio information in new contexts, and the personalisation of learning, including for individuals to review and assess the relative suitability of alternative learning pathways to achieve their goals.

Recommended reading

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Charlesworth, A. & Home A. (2005) Data Protection, Lifelong Learner Record Systems & ePortfolios: A Short FAQ http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/Data_Protection_FAQ.pdf (accessed 02 August 2005)

Developing a progress file for HE: Guidelines on HE progress files

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressfiles/guidelines/default.asp> (accessed 02 August 2005)

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Acronyms:

DfES – Department for Education and Skills
HEFCE – Higher Education Funding Council for England
JISC – Joint Information Systems Committee
MIS – Management Information Systems
MLE – Managed Learning Environment
PDP – Personal Development Planning
VLE – Virtual Learning Environment

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