

Welcome...

Editorial

Rob Ward, Director, the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA)

Welcome to the first edition of the Newsletter for 2007.

The theme which – loosely – connects the contributions is based upon ‘understanding the student experience of PDP’ (and – perhaps most importantly) using this understanding to ensure practice becomes more relevant and meaningful to learners. There were several primers for this: the widespread recognition of the need for more evidence-informed practice which we have noted in previous work; the important contribution made by Manchester students at the CRA residential seminar last November, and a short but immensely positive contribution at the CRA January Meeting by Wes Streeting, NUS Vice President (Education). The latter in particular suggested that an increasing number of students understand the potential value of engaging in PDP processes for themselves and their compatriots, and we are very pleased to have a contribution from Wes as our ‘lead’ piece for this issue.

Karen O’Rourke follows this with an account of the student contribution at our National Residential Seminar in November; a contribution which cast delegates in the role of learners and presenters and students in role of decision makers. Delegate feedback suggested more student involvement in such events would be a very positive step. Pauline Kneale then reports on student involvement in the researching of PDP practice in the wider world, an approach to engagement which itself provided considerable opportunity for the development of understanding of the processes of PDP and their role. Significantly, students who saw the process as ‘a long way off’ were challenged by those most likely to influence their views – fellow students. Later contributions, from Peter Stordy, Louise Frith and Frank Goodridge and Sue Burkinshaw show how institutions are at the point of refining practice in the light of learning from student responses. In a different way, the contribution from Joan Cartledge – with its emphasis on ‘incentivisation’ outside the curriculum

but within the framework for accreditation – tackles similar territory in respect of student engagement. As Joan also reports, work is also being developed at Birmingham to embed practice within academic programmes. Finally, Jill Cosh brings us back to some of the challenges this presents: between ensuring engagement (which supports local development of practice) and consistency (which may tend towards uniformity of practice); and of supporting staff engagement. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of the evaluation process of this work. Given the number of institutions now engaged in such research and evaluation work, we hope for a positive response to the invitation to participate in the new international cohort of institutions researching into PDP and e-portfolio practice. Full details will be with you very shortly!

Inside this issue:

PDP and Beyond; a perspective from the student world	1
Dragons’ Den comes to Manchester!	2
Introducing students to workplace PDPs	3
A <u>REAL</u> istic Approach to PDP: ‘ <u>R</u> eflection, <u>E</u> mployability <u>A</u> nd <u>L</u> earning’	6
Student engagement with PDP at Kent	7
An evaluation of the Personal Development Planning Initiative (framework) for students studying at the University of Bolton.	8
Stand Out in the Crowd	9
PDP in The Faculty of Art, Law and Social Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University.	10
News and Events	11

PDP and Beyond; a perspective from the student world

Wes Streeting, National Union of Students.

Before the next edition of PDP UK, the Burgess Steering Group on measuring and recording student achievement will have issued its final report and the sector will have had plenty of time to begin digesting its findings. As a member of that Steering Group, I won’t pre-empt the publication of our final report by revealing its findings, but I will reveal that I was struck by some of the feedback we received through our last consultation exercise.



I believe that there remains within the sector an enormous reluctance to confront the elephant facing us in the room: that while the quality of the UK higher education system is truly excellent, the way in which we measure and record the outcomes of students' learning experiences is past its sell-by date. Some simply do not see any case for reforming the honours degree classification system at all; perhaps our report will convince them that a system that was apparently introduced by Oxford University in the early 19th century is no longer fit for the knowledge economy of the 21st century. The honours degree classification system has served us well in the past and has had a good innings, but it's time to change.

Throughout the process led by Bob Burgess, NUS has consistently raised issues around how we measure and record non-formal learning. Students are increasingly engaged in a broad range of activities that make up the wider student experience: engaging in activities, volunteering, sports clubs, societies, running students' unions. We know – and employers value – the enormous range of transferable skills that increase students' employability and wider educational experience. Graduates want and need the ability to communicate these skills and experiences to their future employers or place of study in a way that is transparent, consistent and fair.



The role of Personal Development Planning is central, but its potential is not yet being realised. The higher education Progress File, comprised of the academic Transcript and PDP, was first proposed by the Dearing Report to help to make the outcomes of learning more explicit, identify the achievements of learning, and support the concept that learning is a lifetime activity. The QAA Guidelines for Progress Files anticipated the widespread introduction of the transcript by 2002/2003 and the PDP element to be operational for all higher education awards, across the whole higher education sector, by 2005/06. By now, Progress Files should have been introduced and implemented by all UK

higher education institutions. It is plain for all to see that in 2007, the sector is far from the expected reality.

At a recent meeting of the Centre for Recording Achievement in London in February, I said that the NUS approach to PDP, up until now, has been much like its membership: we believe it to be a 'good thing', we think it is beneficial to those who've made the most of it and we realise that we probably should've been doing more about it – and sooner.

I am delighted, therefore, that NUS has recently joined with the CRA in submitting a proposal for action research which, if funded, holds out the prospect of improving the quality of PDP practice. There is a growing wealth of evidence and good practice out there to learn from and an increasing impetus to deliver on what Dearing envisaged long ago.

If we can get PDP right across the myriad of courses, programmes and institutions that make up our increasingly diverse sector we will have made significant steps forward for students, employers and institutions alike.

Wes Streeting is Vice-President (Education) of the National Union of Students. He is also a member of the Burgess Steering Group and a non-executive director of the Higher Education Academy

Dragons' Den comes to Manchester!

Karen O'Rourke, The University of Manchester

Student interns from the Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning (CEEBL) recently designed and led a workshop on Personal Development Planning (PDP) at the annual Centre for Recording Achievement conference (CRA) at the Midland Hotel, Manchester.

Invited to deliver a student-led session at the CRA conference, the CEEBL intern team chose to organise a 'Dragons' Den' of PDP. Greg Tinker, Student Sabbatical Officer at the Centre, led the session along with student interns Jamie Wood, Louise Goldring, Mary Sattenstall and Kate Maull.

'We wanted to do something really different that would first grab their attention and secondly illustrate the real-world problems that both students *and* lecturers face with PDP, Greg explains. Rather than making the

session purely student-focussed, the interns asked all of the delegates to work in several teams, some taking on the role of the student and others working from the perspective of the lecturer. Then, without warning, they asked the teams to link-up in order to arrive at a compromise.

Each task related to some challenging aspect of PDP, such as how to integrate PDP into personal tutorials and how to motivate students. Each team came up with a unique solution to their assigned problem, taking into account both perspectives, and then presented their solution to the *Dragons' Den* (CEEBL student interns) in whatever way they preferred. Marks were awarded by the dragons for the most creative solutions!

The result was phenomenal. Encouraged to see PDP issues from both sides, the delegates put together some innovative solutions in their presentations to the dragons, packed with all kinds of amateur dramatics and comedy routines. Greg explains: 'Some of the delegates seemed unsure as to the purpose of the exercise at first, but this was gradually revealed as it progressed. In this way, what has been learned tends to sink in at a much deeper level because the participants are forced to enquire as to why they are even doing the exercise, and thus become active learners through this process of reflexivity.'

The final score was a tie between two teams. Both came up with some very interesting solutions, such as a student PDP 'buddy' system. After some heated discussion between the dragons, the lucky team was presented with two fabulous prizes: a vintage Record of Achievement folder (!) and two bottles of Champagne.

Greg comments: 'As a result of this session, we have been approached by other organisations that are keen to involve us in their future events. This is excellent news for the Centre and the University, and provides us with further opportunities to disseminate our 'partners in learning' approach to a much wider audience'.

Staff at the CRA remarked: 'I think it was good to see students so involved with the issues and actively prepared to improve institutional practice.'

The Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning is accepting bids for 2007 – 2008 project funding until January 31st. More information can be found at the CEEBL website: www.manchester.ac.uk/ceebl.

For the benefit of readers who don't have access to UK Television: The Dragons' Den is a UK TV show in which entrepreneurs attempt to persuade a group of highly successful business people –

The Dragons – to invest in their business proposals. Candidates are subjected to very tough, probing, critical questions and only a few succeed in persuading some or all of the Dragons to invest in their ventures.



The University of Manchester 'Dragons'.

Introducing students to workplace PDPs

Pauline Kneale

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There can never be only one approach to personal planning, and what is effective for one person probably will not work for the next. Additionally there is a lacunae in most student's seeing the connection between planning at university and in the workplace. This paper reflects on student responses to materials designed to help them develop a clearer understanding of the role of PDP in the workplace and gain an insight into the longer term benefits of personal planning and reflection. Student responses (*in italics*) are used to highlight some of the learning benefits.

The Materials

Interviews were undertaken with an employee from three very different organisations, a charity, a local authority and a private company, each with their own PDP processes. These explored employees' views on the benefits and drawbacks of the process and the procedures used. Interview transcripts formed the basis for a set of four activities that can be run with students in tutorials and workshops. These are available at:

<http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/courses/other/performance/pdpindex.html> (accessed 12th March 2007)

How do businesses manage staff development?

The most straightforward activity simply asks students to discuss the three employee interviews identified above focussing on one of the following themes. 1) How the interviews fit with your understanding of the role of PDP. What is new? What is unexpected? 2) Given this insight into workplace use of PDPs, how would you re-design your University / Department / School PDP to make it work better for you? Or 3) How could your own PDP practice develop as a result of your discussions?

Many students expressed surprise that ongoing training and development exists in the workplace. There was a feeling that you studied at university and then became employable based on what you had learnt. The idea of continuing to learn on the job was a revelation.

A second theme focused around the statements that being made to fill out forms can cause frustration. By the end of the session there was a clearer understanding that *'the form' is not the vital part of PDP. It is the process itself that is important, the conversations that you have with your manager.* The form is just the starting point.

Creating a PDP for a small business

Working in small groups, students used the interviews and copies of PDP forms from a number of organisations to create a PDP process for a small business. The aim was to give them an insight into how the PDP process is structured.

The responses showed students beginning to appreciate the importance of the PDP process, commenting that they thought it gave the company a chance to develop its workforce and provided the employee with the support they need to progress in their career. Some students engaged with the concept of enlightened self-interest, the idea that if the employee is happy and satisfied then they will be more efficient, thus benefiting the company.

There was a realisation that a variety of issues would need to be considered by the company to make the process as useful as possible and that different companies would benefit from different approaches. The PDP process is definitely not a 'one-size fits all' concept.

Reflecting after the workshop, some students could see ways to adapt their own practices. *Would probably be a good idea to have a weekly plan of what I want to achieve and how I am going to plan my time to ensure work done on time. And I will try to plan more clearly and in distinct sessions so that when I have done a section I feel like I have reached a goal.*

Exploring personal experiences of PDP in the workplace

Working in groups of three, two people interviewed a student who had previous experience of the PDP process, either in vacation/gap-year work or full time employment. The interviewers sought to understand the practical and personal application, impact and outcomes of the process for the interviewee. They then created a mini presentation highlighting the main processes, benefits and disadvantages their colleague had outlined.

The students felt that this activity emphasised the value of PDP in terms of providing employees with structure and direction. *We gained an appreciation of how there are very different approaches to PDP in different businesses.* It also provided useful experience of interviews from both sides of the desk. Students realised that being able to frame pertinent questions is a valuable skill, that it is sometimes easier to answer questions than to ask them, and that interviews lead in unexpected directions: *Questions we asked didn't get neat answers - the answer spilled over into other topics.* The benefits of effective communication and listening skills were also highlighted.



Summative assessment can link research and teaching here

Students were challenged to find a colleague, relative or friend using PDP at work. The students used the interviews as a background to develop their own questions to research that person's understanding and use of reflection and planning in their own workplace.

Few students had realised that the use of PDP was so widespread. They expressed surprise that nearly everyone they asked had had some experience of PDP (*You don't realise that this happens*), that people were keen to talk about it, and that the people interviewed were generally viewing the process as a positive thing.

Students were definitely engaging with the concept that PDP does exist in 'real life', is very much embedded in the workplace and is

here to stay. *When we first talked about it our group agreed you just made it up and that is kind of what happens at school and here. You do it just for the teacher. Talking to Elle you could see her line manager is the person she works with all day and talks to every day so 'making it up' isn't an option. And she was really positive about it helping with doing a better job.*

Evaluation

The responses highlighted above were made during the feedback sessions or in students' reflective logs. In addition, student responses to the activities were recorded by an independent evaluator who observed the first workshops. The diversity of response is encapsulated in these two statements *It didn't help me at all, didn't enjoy it, couldn't see how see how it was benefiting me;* and *In my experience I have seen people using it to advance their career.*

The evaluator reported that all participants worked with enthusiasm and that energy levels were high. All groups paid attention to the instructions they were given and quickly got to grips with the tasks. There were high levels of engagement with all members of a group appearing to be involved and equal levels of engagement from both sexes.

A focus group was held by the independent evaluator two weeks after the workshop. Eight students, four women and four men, discussed the activities generally and focussed on

- What does PDP mean to you?/How has the session changed what PDP means to you?/What does it mean to you now?
- What will you do differently as a result of the session?
- What would you change to improve the workshop?



A significant outcome of the focus group was that participants' views of PDP and the session seemed to relate directly to their experience of personal planning. Those that had little exposure to PDP or the workplace were generally 'reluctant participants' who couldn't see the point of PDP. They viewed it as just learning what the employer

wanted to hear. These students were also the least likely to have found the session easy and struggled to relate PDP to their current circumstances.

In contrast, those that had experience of workplace PDP processes were much more able to engage with the benefits of PDP and were ready to take it seriously.

The former group can be described as 'postponers'; for them PDP was a long way off, not relevant to their current life situation, something *not to be bothered by until I get a real job*. Interestingly, participating in the review session enabled these students to hear other more positive reactions to PDP, possibly the most powerful way of challenging their beliefs.

It seemed that most people had altered their thinking on PDP, if only in as much as they had begun to think about it at all. Those people who thought that there might be something in PDP for them spoke of the practical outcomes of the session; that they now had more knowledge of the process, they could see how a PDP might be formulated, that their interview skills had developed and how they might use PDP to advance their career. Even those participants who felt that *the importance of PDP is exaggerated* still believed that *the session had been beneficial*.

The students who had engaged most with PDP were ready to make changes in their own personal planning as they wanted to develop themselves now and push the boundaries. They felt that it was worthwhile to put a lot of effort into personal planning.

More cautious participants confirmed that they had *learnt a great deal from the session* and that it had opened their minds to the concept of PDP. They might not be about to change their own behaviour in the short term but felt that once in employment they would *find out about the employers human resources and planning policies*.

Even the most reluctant 'postponers' felt, on reflection, slightly more positive about PDP as hearing their peers' views had challenged their own evaluations. The sessions would seem to have at least some merit.

Acknowledgements

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A REAListic Approach to PDP: 'Reflection, Employability And Learning'

Peter Stordy, University of Sheffield

The Department of Information Studies (University of Sheffield) first attempt at implementing PDP (Personal Development Planning) was a failure, despite some enthusiastic staff and a sound underlying pedagogy. Based on the University's PDP framework, it was modified for the perceived needs of under-graduate and post-graduate students and implemented through the University's MUSE system and our own personal tutorial system. Although we recognised that our implementation was flawed, we were still surprised at the apparent lack of interest shown by students. As a result, it was decided to re-launch PDP in Autumn 2006 to new entrants.

To understand why our previous implementation of PDP had apparently failed and what might motivate students to become more involved with PDP, students from the previous cohort and staff were interviewed. In an attempt to ensure our new PDP was meeting both the needs of prospective employers and students, a review of the literature was conducted along with an e-mail questionnaire to the members our Advisory Panel (all information and library professionals). In addition, the advice of several university colleagues with PDP expertise was sought.

This small-scale research revealed a general 'apathy' towards PDP. The few students that had considered our implementation said that it failed to meet their needs and expectations. It was decided that a more pragmatic and re-branded PDP was required that focused on student reflection, employability skills and learning outcomes. Crucial, was the need to ensure that students and staff were aware of the advantages of taking part in a scheme:

- Improvements to student performance across the curriculum as the students become more independent learners
- Student employability and motivation increases as they recognise the generic and transferable skills acquired through their studies and work experience
- PDP is the start of independent learning for continuing professional development (CPD)

At the centre of our new PDP framework entitled 'REAL' (Reflection, Employability And Learning) are a set of programme specific Personal Review forms. These use Younger's (2005) analysis of skills required by Library & Information

professionals, HEA guidance (Edwards, 2005), SCONUL's (2005) information literacy skills, TFPL (2005) skills levels and curriculum learning outcomes. REAL continues to use our personal tutorial system to facilitate the PDP process, but now uses two WebCT implementations (under-graduate and post-graduate) to disseminate it and related material. More importantly, REAL is now embedded into several modules, increasing its exposure and relevance to students' learning.

Obviously, the full impact of REAL on students' independent learning and employability will not be recognised for some time, but early indications are favourable. Informal staff and student comments indicate a higher participation rate and increased motivation. The number of hits on the post-graduate and under-graduate WebCT sites is over 400 – and this is before the sites have been fully developed.

To conclude, here is a recent post-graduate comment left on our REAL WebCT site:

I think this is a good opportunity to audit existing skills and highlight development areas which can then be transferred to a CV/job application. When the mind is focused on a particular issue it allows us to investigate our knowledge of the area. Sometimes a focus is needed to bring these skills and knowledge to mind...

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Student engagement with PDP at Kent

Louise Frith, University of Kent

At the University of Kent we have recently reviewed our PDP practice. Our aim was to get an overview of the variety of practice at the University, to identify good or interesting practice and to get a sense from students about how PDP can be strengthened.

Background

In 2002 the university gave all students access to The Keynote Project PDP online materials. In addition responsibility was given to each department to make PDP available to all students. This resulted in a rich variety of practice some of which is outlined below.

Kent Law School

Use of WebCT learning journal: The law school are currently piloting a WebCT tutorial/skills module for all Kent Law School undergraduates. The module is not compulsory but students are strongly recommended to use it. They are directed to it by their academic tutors and its main purposes are:

1. To help students identify gaps in their academic skills and learn more.
2. To provide students with a mechanism to record and track their development.
3. To assist tutors to write references.

WebCT has the facility to deliver teaching materials and self-assessments to students and to set-up discussions and online journals which students can contribute to. This is also being used in **Computer Science** at Medway.

The Department of Engineering

Compulsory tutorial system: the tutorial system in engineering was not engaging students as much as the department would have liked. Last year, in an effort to enhance student engagement with the tutorial system and to help with student retention, the department set-up compulsory tutorials the department is planning to integrate PDP into the tutorial system through use of an e-portfolio.

Kent Business School

Skills module: This year the Business School is running a skills module called 'Business Tools' for most of its year 1 students. The module runs for 12 weeks it contains PDP, study skills such as writing essays, note taking, participating in seminars, time management etc. It is assessed and is worth 30 credits.

The Architecture Department

Student reflection on tutor feedback:

Architecture uses a detailed feedback form for students' assignments with space on it for students to respond to their tutor's comments. Students are also encouraged to continue their reflection as part of their PDP.

The Department of Biosciences

Post graduate development programme:

This enables all post graduates in biosciences to accumulate training credits throughout their course. A minimum of 60 credits must be obtained prior to completion of the course. All students receive a **Post-Graduate Development Folder** in which they record their PDP progress this provides them with a permanent record of their training at post graduate level.

Student views of PDP

In addition to getting information from departments we also wanted to find out from students their views on PDP. A small sample group of Year 2 students were asked their opinions of PDP. All of them recognised the need for their degree to teach them not just subject content but also develop a variety of skills to help them communicate their knowledge. Below are some quotations from the students about how they would like to be supported with Personal Development Planning.



'I would like there to be an easy-to-use computer programme to support my PDP.'
Year 2 Criminology and Sociology student.

'I would like to have someone there to help me with the review and reflection and to keep me doing it.' Year 2 Business Studies student.

'I would like there to be a fill-in PDP portfolio on the U of K website.' Year 2 Computer Science student.

'I would like PDP to be made compulsory so that departments would schedule PDP sessions which relate specifically to the degree programme.' Year 2 Computer Science student.

As well as the above views, recent data collected in the National Student Survey 2006 show that in a number of departments in the University, there is scope for improvement in supporting students with their personal development.

Outcomes

As a result of this review we feel that the University needs to find a way for students to bring together their PDP experience that does not suffocate the rich diversity of departmental practice. We want there to be something tangible which staff and students can point to which is their PDP. As a result, we are researching a number of e-portfolio software tools. A very important consideration for us is to ensure that the e-portfolio is 'student-owned' and directed. For this to happen we have found the support of the Kent Union to be invaluable. They are promoting the e-portfolio through; a new student mentoring scheme, the volunteering scheme, and student representative networks.

We are currently piloting an e-portfolio tool. The evaluation of this will be mainly focusing on students' responses to it. We hope to be in a position to make a judgement on whether to or not to have an e-portfolio campus-wide by the end of this academic year.



An evaluation of the Personal Development Planning Initiative (framework) for students studying at the University of Bolton.

Frank Goodridge (Project Leader) and Sue Burkinshaw (Educational Development Unit Co-ordinator), the University of Bolton.

Introduction

In the academic year 2005/06 student Personal Development Planning (PDP) was introduced in a common framework across the University of Bolton. The approach taken was to embed PDP within the curriculum. Two years on a survey has been carried out across the university of staff and students on how PDP is progressing. The diverse approach of Departments to PDP implementation precluded the use of a single questionnaire, instead focus group meetings were held, including professional services staff such as the Careers Service, and Learning Support and Development. The survey coincided with a restructuring of the University's Departments into new Schools.

Findings

As might be expected there was great variation in the delivery of PDP. The best examples were where departments had settled for PDP supported by portfolios which guided and recorded the student's progression. Built Environment has championed an e-portfolio by the use of RAPID (Recording Achievement for Professional and Individual Development). There was also good practice in a few departments using skills and learning style audits to inform the student's PDP. Student response to PDP showed a full spectrum from enthusiasm through to resigned acceptance. What became clear was that none of the students seen were taking ownership of their PDP. Even the most enthusiastic still regarded it as something to be done for the University. Assessment of PDP was also an issue as students were doubtful of the reliability of marks awarded for what they saw as work which was very individual. However in every case there were well established assessment criteria, and no issues with marking arising with external examiners. One unfortunate consequence of the restructuring

was loss of experienced PDP staff through voluntary severance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

After a strong start with PDP there has been an element of fading, in part because of the often heavy time commitment required of tutors and the loss of key staff and drivers of PDP. The restructuring has, however, presented an opportunity for better co-ordination of PDP activities across the university, making use of Principal Lecturers holding responsibilities for Teaching and Learning. The lack of ownership of PDP by students might be addressed by the use of skills and learning audits as standard practice across the University and have the effect of putting the 'Personal' back into PDP. The University's Strategic Plan, and Teaching and Learning Strategy, both emphasise the importance of Lifelong Learning and development of the individual student. An effective PDP will provide a focus for these activities for staff and students alike.

Stand Out in the Crowd

Personal Development Planning at the University of Birmingham

Joan Cartledge, Project Manager PDP

At the University of Birmingham we started thinking about Personal Development Planning (PDP) in 2000. It has not been an easy process, but we believe we have established a number of initiatives that enable students to engage with PDP.

As soon as students have registered at the University of Birmingham they can access >>Progress>>, our online programme designed to enable students to reflect on and develop skills whilst completing their studies. Students have reported that this early opportunity to engage with PDP enables them both to feel part of the University before they arrive, aiding their transition. >>Progress>> also enables them to reflect on the skills they need to develop and the kinds of activities they can become involved in at university to achieve their goals.

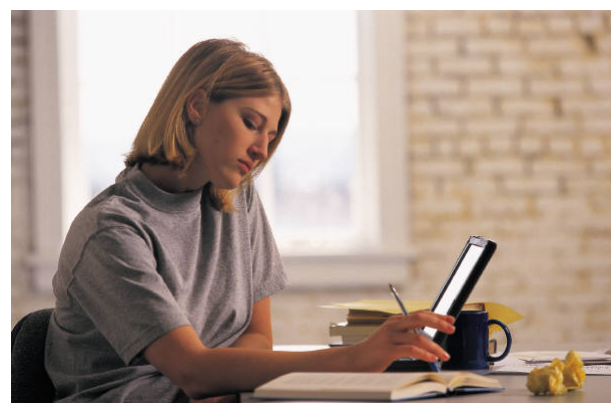
In 2003 the Personal Skills Award (PSA) as launched across the University to provide an opportunity for students to access accredited skills training. The PSA offers students the opportunity to take a range of modules leading to a total of 30 credits which appear on their transcript in addition to their degree. Courses include modules on self development, career planning, learning from work and voluntary

experience, languages media presentation skills, engaging with other cultures, information technology and self-presentation skills. The PSA has been so popular with students that we have been required to expand the programme by 50% for the coming year. Awarding credits which appear on a student's transcript is a clear incentive for many students. Feedback from employers has also been very positive in relation to this initiative.

In addition to the PSA, in 2005 the university launched a joint initiative between the Enterprise and Innovation Centre and the Division of Student life, the 'Honey pot' Scheme. Students are encouraged to develop a Project or undertake a summer internship; the aim of this initiative is to enable students to develop transferable skills for the future. A grant of up to £1,000 is given to support them. Students accessing this fund have participated in a wide range of activities including: volunteer work in Thailand, a telephone recycling enterprise scheme in Nigeria, a small business scheme to support student managing their utilities whilst at the university and an educational exchange programme in Kenya.

It has been our experience at the University of Birmingham, in common with many other universities, that personal development and planning for life after university is not a priority for most students. Our strategy has been to attempt to engage the interest of students before they arrive, and to offer incentives to students in the form of accredited courses and grants to those who wish to engage in personal development planning and extra-curricular skills development opportunities. We believe we are making steady progress in this.

Alongside the strategy outlined above, the University has embarked on a strategy to embed personal development and skills development within the academic programme in every subject area through the Learning Development Unit.



PDP in The Faculty of Art, Law and Social Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University.

Engagement vs Consistency

Jill Cosh, Anglia Ruskin University

One of the greatest challenges in the implementation of PDP is to both ensure student engagement through flexibility and relevance and at the same time to address consistency and the equality of the student experience across programmes and delivery points. The approach to PDP in our Faculty has, therefore, been based on a combination of Faculty guidelines, and module-based variation.

In order to ensure quality and a certain element of consistency, guidelines have been produced on PDP support for students. These guidelines argue that the Faculty cannot rely exclusively on a purely voluntary system of engagement with PDP. Furthermore, past problems with implementing a robust personal tutor system, where a certain measure of attendance can be relied upon, have led to the conclusion that PDP could not be reliably supported through either a personal or group tutorial system. It was, therefore, decided that PDP should be lodged within one core module at each level – level one focusing upon the transition to HE, level two on the theme of employability, and level 3 on the transition to work. It is also required that PDP related activity should form a small element of the assessment of these modules in order to ensure student engagement with the process. This may either be allocated a small percentage of the marks (10-15%) or may be pass/fail.

It was felt, however, that there is a danger that too high a level of consistency could lead to a lack of engagement from both staff and students, and that meaningful PDP would be more likely to be encouraged if it were varied and linked to module content and the student's discipline. Therefore, within the guidelines each PDP-responsible module will address PDP in a different way depending on the level, the content and the discipline. For example some modules may lend themselves to portfolio assessment, others may include group work or presentations which could be accompanied by a reflective evaluation, and others with a more traditional essay assignment may prefer to incorporate a reflective appendix by the students on how the assignment has helped them to achieve the module outcomes or transferable skills.

Once the general nature of PDP implementation within the Faculty was decided, it was necessary to address the nature of both staff and student

support and engagement. It was therefore decided to create a carefully structured Faculty web-based (WebCT) student portfolio; all students were given an induction session and handout on how to access this, and on how they could use it both to record their personal development planning and achievements and also on how to utilise links to support materials and services. Members of staff are also registered so that they can edit the WebCT programmes in order to incorporate extra features such as course materials or discussion boards.

It was felt that a crucial prerequisite to student engagement was staff engagement particularly within those teaching on the relevant modules. Support in the nature of advice and materials has been provided though a list of suggested ways to integrate PDP in the assessment and module – this ranged from the basic level of asking students to complete relevant pages on the WebCT portfolio to the use of portfolios, and structured reflective statements. This was later supplemented by a list of examples of the ways in which lecturers were integrating the PDP element within their course and assessment. This included reflective statements, development plans, links between their studies and related jobs, CV production, and reports, and was accompanied by details of whom to contact for more information and supported by a workshop.

The strength of this approach is that there will be a variety of approaches to PDP, which will hopefully foster engagement and prevent a mechanistic approach to the process. There is, however, a need to locate and disseminate best practice through evaluation of the many strands of this approach: the web materials, the induction session, the integration within modules and assessment, and the support for staff. This is currently being carried out through student and staff questionnaires and focus groups, and an audit of student use of the web-based materials. The results of the evaluation will be used for dissemination of best practice and to inform the process for future years.

The evaluation project will be completed by August 2007 and it is hoped to report on the outcomes in a future edition of the newsletter.



News and Events:

Forthcoming events:

CPD and PDP and STAFF APPRAISAL: How are they related?

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, THE OLD FIRE STATION, SALFORD UNIVERSITY

FRIDAY 30TH MARCH 2007, 10.15am-15.30pm

The Context

The common factor in these three processes is of course the learner but there are important differences. In CPD the learner is at the heart of the process but the professional body has an interest. In PDP the learner is also a student and is affected by the expectations and procedures of the university. In staff appraisal the learner is an employee and the process may contribute to reward procedures as well as staff development.

What is best for the learner? How much support should be made available and how much integration with other processes is advisable? Does too strong a link between providing support for the learner and monitoring their progress inhibit or help the motivation to learn?

Full details available at: <http://www.recordingachievement.org/events/detail.asp?eventid=109>

Implementing PDP: You are not alone!

The implementation of the UK Higher Education Progress File represents a unique teaching and learning project and a world 'first'. When implemented it is intended to provide each student with a Transcript/Diploma Supplement and a means of Personal Development Planning by which the student can '*monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development*' (Quality Assurance Agency 2001).

As we move beyond early champions and enthusiasts into mainstream implementation, a range of issues will arise and strategies will need to be developed in order to ensure quality and worthwhile practice for all students. This workshop will give participants the opportunity to:

- Learn about key issues at national level.
- Share some of the key challenges they face, and get some support in devising strategies for tackling them.
- Offer their own experience in helping others take forward their thinking and practice.

This meeting will be highly interactive and participative, with maximum opportunities of discussion, debate and even conflict resolution!

Booking details are available at: <http://www.recordingachievement.org/events/detail.asp?eventid=110>

Keeping up:

Survey results published: e-pdp and e-portfolio practice in UK higher education

This survey was undertaken by the Centre for Recording Achievement on behalf of the Higher Education Academy. The e-portfolio field is changing very rapidly and this survey provides a snapshot, at an interesting juncture, of an ongoing process.

Full details of this project are available at: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/news/20_5312.htm

If you have any news items or events that you wish to publicise in the next issue, please email Tansy Abbott at tansy@recordingachievement.org with the details.