



## Editorial

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

Welcome back to the new academic year, and to issue 15 of our Newsletter, which now reaches an extended community following the merging of two of our Jiscmail lists. As ever, this time around we seek to reflect – and inform – the range of interests and practice represented within our community, with attention paid to the implementation of policy developments, to supporting the enhancement of practice, and to the experience of an individual learner.

Aminder Nijjar sets the scene by highlighting key points from the recent survey of PDP implementation, thereby providing an overall perspective which might help you to place your own achievements in context. Next Kirsty Miller and Jonathan Weyers present an account of work in progress to support institutional implementation, work which fits well with the Scottish approach to Quality Enhancement but – as the CRA Residential confirmed - will be of interest throughout the UK. In respect of trial work to develop the HEAR, which eighteen institutions are now undertaking, Mark Atlay raises important challenges as to how we can ensure this will lead to a richer and more holistic picture of graduate achievement as well as contribute formatively to learning and development. Encouragingly, such approaches, which offer the possibility of bringing PDP approaches and institutional documentation into a clearer relationship with one another, seems to be coming into prominence in thinking – and practice - within the trial institutions. CRA is supporting the trial work and will do all that we can to keep you informed of developments in the months ahead.

Moving further into practice, Lisa Gray outlines some of the new resources now available from JISC to support e-portfolio implementation. Alfredo Gaitan, Rob Manton and Maja Jankowska, report upon work to implement e-portfolios, reminding us that, just as with paper-based systems, alignment with pedagogic principles and curriculum practices are key; the emphasis for the future being upon embedding practice in many modules rather than one. The development of year long modules is also likely to prove an important factor here. Penultimately, and in some ways most importantly, we discover in the contribution from Louise Frith an account that e-portfolios can make a difference to the experiences of one student at least, an account that once again reminds us again of the importance of students as advocates for provision rather than simply as recipients of it. Then, last and by no means least, Aminder

returns to convey a little of our new e-portfolio policy project, a truly exciting development we'll be telling you more about in 2009 and beyond.

Until then, have a wonderful Xmas break!



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## A survey of implementing PDP with students in Higher Education

### Aminder Nijjar, the Centre for Recording Achievement

Led by the QAA, a revision of the guidelines for the implementation of PDP has been underway and as part of this process, feedback was sought from the sector on the interpretation and effectiveness of current policy.

A survey created by the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) on behalf of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) was sent to all CRA members and members of PDP-UK as well as the survey being placed on the HEA website during summer 2008.

The survey aimed to gather an insight into the experience and opinions of relevant parties. The methodology used was an online non-anonymous survey. The responses consisted of individuals, collective responses from an institution and in some cases more than one response from one institution. A total of 86 responses were received representing 68 institutions.

### Some of the key findings:

- 73% of the institutions have an institutional PDP strategy
- PDP implementation is perceived as an increase in staff workload which is being dealt with through PDP related staff identifying what elements of PDP staff are already using; identifying existing development opportunities, showing central support, encouraging a community of practice, providing specific and targeted support and regularly communicating with academic departments
- 58% have a specialist appointment (individual/team)
- Development of PDP for different levels varies:
  - For foundation degrees the development underway: 29%, mostly established: 25%, not applicable: 30%
  - For undergraduate degrees the development underway: 37%, mostly established: 44%
  - For taught postgraduate degrees the majority of institutions have started development 60%
  - And for research postgraduate degrees in 42% of institutions development has started and 29% have PDP mostly established
- The PDP policies within institutions do not require staff to be trained to deliver PDP in 77% whereas 13% do and 52% of institutions have training available for delivering PDP
- 75 % provide a generic PDP tool across the institution, of which, 55% is electronic only and 40% is in paper and electronic format
- PDP implementation, within credit-bearing components of the curriculum within certain areas or for some students is by far the most popular method. Practices across the whole institution are the least common and in 85% of cases, PDP is part of a compulsory module of the programme
- Outcomes of PDP activities are assessed amongst 68% of the institutions
- Completion of PDP activities are required for progression in 49% of institutions
- There is mixed feeling about how fit for purpose national policy and conceptual frameworks for PDP are, with approximately 58% agreeing, 20% being neutral and 22% disagreeing
- The general consensus is that PDP should be in different subject areas and at different levels
- The vast majority of respondents think that stronger connections need to be made to related practice pre-HE and post-HE

- Overall, links between the transcript and PDP elements of policy are limited
- Most PDP policies have been developed from practical experience within institutions
- The following have been chosen as the most popular ways for improving PDP implementation within institutions (in order of preference):
  - An evidence base providing a clear demonstration of value/benefit for staff and students
  - Evidence that employers and professional bodies care, particularly in the context of many different versions of PDP (and resultant records)
  - Stronger commitment from very senior management: Directorate/ Executive
  - Local/departmental academic champions (amongst senior staff)
  - High quality resources/ support for staff (and students)

Based on the results, the CRA is planning to:

1. Collate and make available on the CRA website research and case studies for evidencing the value and benefits of PDP and e-portfolios
2. Develop a stronger employer engagement strategy in relation to PDP and e-portfolios in partnership with CRA members
3. Have dialogue with very senior management through representative committees and forums
4. Continue to seek and engage in opportunities for further evidence-based research, development of resources and training,

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## Enhancing PDP Activities in Scottish Higher Education Institutions through Effective Strategy, Policy and Practice: a Toolkit

**Kirsty Miller and Jonathan Weyers,  
University of Dundee**

A Scottish consultancy project to enable Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to analyse and evaluate their teaching and learning strategies in relation to the implementation of personal development planning (PDP) is currently in progress. Designed to complement the revision of the QAA's UK-wide *Guidelines for Personal Development Planning (2008)*, it is part of a programme of work to support PDP development in Scottish HEIs led by QAA Scotland (QAAS), the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

A team from the University of Dundee is currently developing this Toolkit, which is designed with a 'stranded' approach in mind, allowing different groups of staff to engage with different parts, in different ways and at different times.



### The development process

Dundee's e-portfolio-based *My PDP* resource is well-known<sup>1</sup> and a strength of the Dundee team's approach was to bring a wide range of experience and perspectives to the work. The current authors, who were closely involved in the development of *My PDP*, contributed an employability and quality enhancement aspect as Careers Adviser and Director of Quality Assurance respectively; Stuart Cross, School of Law, contributed a learning and teaching perspective and advised on issues relating to Professional and Statutory Bodies; Eric Monaghan, Academic Affairs contributed a strategic perspective and Lorraine Walsh, Director Academic Professional Development, acted as a consultant on relevant aspects of pedagogy and use of a toolkit approach in reflective practice.

Initial team discussions with Heather Gibson, QAA Scotland, advisor to the project, envisaged a 'precepts' model, melded with reflective self-assessment questions. Various iterations of this model and content were discussed at interactive meetings with the CRA/HEA/QAAS PDP Forum and the Scottish Employability Co-ordinators' Group over the summer and autumn, leading to refinements of approach, scope, and phrasing.

### Progress to date

The structure and content of the Toolkit are now broadly in place. Fourteen aspects of PDP are addressed:

- A. Strategy and Planning
- B. Model, Design and Presentation
- C. Evaluation, Review and Quality Enhancement
- D. Promotion and Introduction
- E. Engaging Academic Staff
- F. Engaging Undergraduate Students
- G. PDP in the Discipline Context
- H. Embedding and Assessment

I. Support for Reflection and Action Planning

J. Progression and Development

K. Benefits for Students

L. Employability and Employment

M. Portability, Lifelong Learning and Continuing Professional Development

N. Engaging Postgraduate Students and Postdoctoral Staff

Each aspect has a brief introduction, followed by a set of associated self-assessment questions (SAQs), with a sub-set of 'key questions' highlighted.

A commentary on each aspect provides relevant background, raises operational matters, supports any contentions made and covers any issues that might arise in practice.

A glossary of terms is provided, as it became evident that PDP-related terms might be capable of multiple interpretations, depending on users' institution, role or discipline.

The aspects and their associated SAQs are designed to be considered singly or in groups by appropriate stakeholders, as it is not envisaged anyone would attempt to consider all matters relating to PDP strategy, policy and practice simultaneously. To aid use, therefore, a mapping table is provided, that indicates aspects likely to be of specific interest to different stakeholder categories.

### The outcomes

The Toolkit will be ready for publication by January 2009 and will be available in hard copy and on the QAA website.

There is still an opportunity for contributing! There will be a workshop at the 8th CRA Residential Seminar in Manchester on 20/21 November 2008. In addition, further information is available from the QAAS Enhancement Theme website with a link provided for feedback. [http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/ELF/imp\\_dp.asp](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/ELF/imp_dp.asp)

It is heartening to report that staff consulted to date have been positive and supportive of this work, which provides a focus for enhancing both the staff and student experience of PDP.

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## HEAR today- gone tomorrow

**Mark Atlay, University of Bedfordshire**

The Burgess review (see [http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/Burgess\\_final.pdf](http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/Burgess_final.pdf)) proposes a new Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) for UK HE students to slowly replace the degree classification.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/careers/mydpdp/>

Universities have begun work on making the HEAR a reality (particularly those who are part of the recently formed and secretive trial group) and are currently exploring what they can and will produce. But will this really make a difference or will the inertia and conservatism of the sector mean that students end up with little more than a slightly more detailed transcript than that which is currently provided – and why should this matter to those interested in recording achievement?

#### The Burgess Proposals

- By academic year 2010/11, following a period of detailed development, a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) will be the central vehicle for recording all university-level undergraduate higher education student achievement in all UK higher education institutions.
- The HEAR will be a single document, based on, and developed from, the current academic transcript, and incorporating the European Diploma Supplement. It will contain a wider range of information than the current academic transcript and will capture more fully than now the strengths and weaknesses of the student's performance. It will also contain information about academic credit, which will link directly to the national credit framework for the part of the UK in which the award is made. Core content will be common to all institutions, which will be free to add additional information as they see fit.
- The HEAR will contain information which the institution is prepared to verify. Further work should be done on how to measure and record skills and achievements gained through non-formal learning but this, along with other student-generated/driven information, should be part of Personal Development Planning (PDP).
- In the short/medium term, the HEAR will also continue to contain an overall summative judgment, verified by the institution. During this period it is likely that this will remain the existing honours degree classification but we anticipate that alternatives might develop as the information available in the HEAR becomes richer.
- In parallel, the UK higher education sector will have considered, debated and resolved a range of key issues and principles relating to assessment. The outcomes, in turn, will feed into the development of the content of the HEAR.

There are numerous barriers acting against a significant change. Institutional systems for gathering more detailed information on students are not robust, verifiable or sufficiently 'joined up' to enable the easy production of official records. Furthermore, some universities have devolved structures making the production of records a localised issue at the

department or faculty level and hence the development of a HEAR is more difficult and complex.

Responsibility for developing the HEAR will often lie within Registry or related functions remote and sometimes unconnected to teaching and learning, careers or educational development areas thus missing some of the opportunities that the HEAR provides.



At a time of increasing competitiveness and league tables, often including rankings on the basis of 'employability', it is unlikely that universities will record both students' strengths and weaknesses. It is much more likely that the HEAR will record achievements and any 'weaknesses' will be notable by their absence in the report requiring some 'reading between the lines' by those scrutinising them.

No university will want to be seen as being 'out on a limb' in the records they produce. Thus there will be a natural tendency, as universities monitor the HEAR's of others, to coalesce around a common, minimum and possibly minimalistic HEAR. Whether two or three different models will appear depending on institutional mission and complexity remains to be seen. These might be a minimalist HEAR where little more than the current transcript and Diploma Supplement details are provided, a detailed HEAR which is a record of attainment gathered from a wide variety of different sources and with a focus on employability, and a developmental HEAR which also focuses on student development and possibly distance travelled.

Finally no resources are being made available to enable the work to be undertaken thus, at a time of increasing pressures on institutional finances, universities will make the minimal response that meets external expectations.

Why does this matter? The Burgess report sets out clearly the reasons for change based around a focus on output (the formal 'record' that students receive) which verifies a set of outcomes (what the students have achieved). What's largely missing from the Burgess report is an acknowledgement of how the nature of the formal record that students

receive at the end of their studies might provide a focus for how they approach and engage with their learning (indeed the report specifically sees PDP and the HEAR as being distinct and unconnected). Knowing that a detailed formal record will be provided, which may differentiate them in the employment market, should not only focus students' attention on those areas where they might want to gather evidence of attainment, but also help motivate them towards greater breadth of achievement and assist with reminding them of the skills which engaging in the range of activities that makes up their higher education experience actually develops. A well-constructed HEAR lays out what we value at the subject and institutional levels and furthermore, if we want graduates capable of making a significant contribution to society as a whole, then it also encapsulates wider attributes and characteristics.

What might go into a HEAR which would help create a richer picture of the student and their experiences? As well as standard information there is a range of other information (of variable ease of verification) which might be included. This includes: degree classification (for now), module titles and grades, course and module learning outcomes (as recorded in programme specifications), work experience, work placements, sandwich year details, international placements/experiences, student representative and related activities, student union work, volunteering, skills transcripts/awards, attendance record (with issues of verifiability and level of detail but important in some subject areas), sports, clubs and societies (where there has been active engagement possibly at a leadership level) and a range of other activities. It may be that students produce a personal statement which is then verified by the institution through evidence that might be in an (e-) portfolio for instance.

We will not get to a detailed HEAR in one stage but the HEAR will develop and evolve as institutions explore what can and should be produced. The concern is that without careful and considered support a detailed, evidenced and developmental HEAR that supports outputs, outcomes and process is unlikely to materialise. The emphasis will be on ease and cost not the quality of the learning experience it could support. So an opportunity to significantly change the way we help and support our students develop a more holistic view of themselves and their attainments will be missed: HEAR today - gone tomorrow.



## e-Portfolios: Tools for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning

Lisa Gray, JISC

Two complementary JISC resources on e-portfolios, launched at ALT-C in Leeds this year, highlight the growing importance of e-portfolios as tools for effective learning in a digital age. The first is a new guide in the JISC Effective Practice series, *Effective Practice with e-Portfolios*, which explores good practice in the use of e-portfolios as a support to learning at all stages throughout a lifetime of learning.

*Effective Practice with e-Portfolios* focuses especially on the role e-portfolios play in the formative processes of learning – for example, by supporting dialogue with peers and tutors, evaluating and celebrating personal achievements and skills development, and, in the process, engaging learners – and professionals – in more profound reflection on their personal development planning (PDP) and continuing professional development (CPD). The guide investigates the concept of 'e-portfolio-based learning' from different perspectives – those of the learner, the practitioner, the institution, a professional body and a potential audience, summarising key points of guidance in each case.

A further source of e-portfolio guidance from JISC for the post-16 and higher education sector comes from JISC infoNet the *e-Portfolios infoKit*. This online resource covers the main drivers, purposes, processes, perspectives and issues around e-portfolio use and gives a valuable synopsis of JISC-funded projects on e-portfolios.

The infoKit provides a templated format which supports a range of ways of accessing the information. As well as browsing by project, users can search case studies by section or by the themes they illustrate. Each case study also comes with an associated resources area which includes reports, presentations and links to additional material for each project. The e-Portfolios infoKit encompasses a broad spectrum of e-portfolio use and offers a valuable single point of access for up-to-date information about what many consider to be the 'the central and common point' of the student learning experience.

*Effective Practice with e-Portfolios* can be ordered online at <http://survey.jisc.ac.uk/eportpub> or downloaded in PDF or accessible text-only format from [www.jisc.ac.uk/effectivepracticeeportfolios](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/effectivepracticeeportfolios)

The e-Portfolios infoKit is available at [www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios](http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios)

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## Moving forward from piloting e-Portfolios: applying the lessons learnt to wider adoption

Alfredo Gaitan, Rob Manton and Maja Jankowska, Bridges CETL, University of Bedfordshire

### The pilot study

A pilot study was carried out in the second semester of the academic year 2006/7 at the University of Bedfordshire in order to trial the e-Portfolio facility available in Blackboard to support PDP practices. Its aims were (a) to establish the effectiveness of e-Portfolios in two very different learning environments in the context of undergraduate degrees: more structured (a PDP module) and less structured (Personal Tutor Groups), and (b) to identify strengths and weaknesses of the e-Portfolio tool available in Blackboard, as well as the amount of technical support required.

It was considered that Level 2 undergraduate students would be in a strong position to engage with reflection as they begin to focus more on their studies and also take steps to enhance their employability profile in preparation for when they leave university. Two areas were chosen, Computing and Psychology, as this provided an opportunity to observe the use of e-Portfolios in very different subject fields and disciplines.

This pilot study used an action research methodology; the evaluation of the viability and effectiveness of the e-Portfolio took place in the context of existing teaching spaces, with two of the researchers involved in the day-to-day delivery of PDP in their respective fields, and the lessons learnt will guide the way they will be used in Computing and Psychology in the next academic year. The conclusions of this study led to key institutional decisions about e-Portfolios and will inform their implementation in a second stage incorporating two new areas in 2008/9 (Media and Nursing). There was no attempt to produce a 'case-and-control' study. The latter approach was not practical as this would have required a group of students not using e-Portfolios from both fields, but all Level 2 Computing students were required to produce e-Portfolios as part of a PDP module. Therefore, rather than focusing on *products* (the portfolios) the study concentrated on the *process* of using the tool. A considerable amount of quantitative and qualitative data was collected at different points using online surveys (twice), focus groups (twice), and interviews about the students' experience.

A group of seventeen level 2 Psychology students volunteered to take part in the pilot. While all level 2 Computing students (100) had to complete an electronic portfolio for a core PDP module, those who took part in the focus groups, the two surveys (81 and 16, respectively) and interviews (21) did so on a purely voluntary basis. Written consent was obtained separately from a small number of students from both fields in order for parts of their portfolios to be shown in conference presentations or included reports.

An initial online survey revealed that students from both fields do not engage much in PDP practices. Very few record learning experiences and publishing/sharing. Focus groups carried out soon after the introduction of e-Portfolios suggested that students perceived potential benefits, both practical (e.g. archiving and organising materials) and related to their Personal Development. They also foresaw some possible technical difficulties. Interviews carried out after having used the tool revealed a wide range of experiences that were grouped into six themes: *self* (discovering one's interests and developing self), *reflection* (description/evaluation, ongoing/summative, concurrent with tasks or subsequent), *attitude to PDP* (changing their views of their studies), *career* (CV-building or anticipating the future), *publishing* (self-presentation, job application or 'show you've done it') and *share* (reluctance to share and helping others). A second focus group and survey provided further detailed information.

### Conclusions

The study helped highlight the following issues related to the tool available in Blackboard:

- The need to upload files to the content collection (prior to inserting them into a portfolio) as a cumbersome and time-consuming aspect.
- Difficulties with uploading images that could be used to create pages (some formats were not acceptable), which the students solved by saving the images in Word files and then uploading them.
- A blog separate from the content collection does not facilitate reflection.
- Linking the blog to the e-Portfolio was problematic as the links were not stable.

On a general level, it was concluded that the success of e-Portfolios depends on the following factors:

1. A platform that enables easy and reliable access.
2. A tool that is free from technical faults and complications.
3. Adequate training and technical support for staff and students.
4. Sound pedagogical principles that relate the portfolios to the learning that takes place in the curriculum.

An example of the lack of a sound pedagogy mentioned above was that there was no opportunity for students to use the feedback to improve their reflective learning. The e-Portfolio was a final product that was not revisited.

### Applying the lessons learnt

Part of the academic year 2007/8 was devoted to data analysis and writing the final report. The above findings and recommendations were further

discussed within the institution in preparation for the next phase of implementation of e-Portfolios across the university. The Blackboard based e-Portfolio continued to be used in Computing and was extended to all Psychology students, although with no weight on grades in the latter case. However, the usage of e-Portfolios in 2007/8 was not formally evaluated.

Based on the pilot study, an institutional decision was made to move away from the Blackboard based e-Portfolio tool over to Pebblepad and that change is now occurring. In addition, a strong pedagogical framework, 'Stimulating learning' (Atlay, Gaitán & Kumar, 2008), within which the tool will be used has been generated by the Bridges-CETL team in the context of a university-wide curriculum review: 'CRe8', (Curriculum Review 2008). In this way, the four factors influencing the success of e-Portfolios identified above were addressed.



This framework, places a strong emphasis on *realistic*<sup>2</sup> and *personalised learning*<sup>3</sup>, as well as on *employability* and *assessment*. The e-Portfolio is now seen as a key vehicle by which these objectives can be achieved.

There are broad commonalities in the ways PDP and the e-Portfolio will be managed in Computing and Psychology in the academic year 2008/9:

- PDP and the e-Portfolio have been fully embedded in the new curriculum. This means that there will be no single academic units<sup>4</sup> solely devoted to PDP and all units will have clear elements of PDP (including employability).

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<sup>2</sup> Learner development is possible if students take part in 'Realistic learning', i.e. learning that is meaningful, active, challenging, reflective, and collaborative.

<sup>3</sup> 'Personalised learning' has been defined by the CETL team as 'a partnership which connects pedagogy, curriculum and learning support with responsibilities, needs and aspirations, to enable the personal and academic development of learners.' (Atlay, Gaitán & Kumar, 2008, p. 242). It is a joint effort on the part of the teaching staff and students to transform their practices and views to enable learning (in an interplay of accommodation and assimilation).

<sup>4</sup> The implementation of CRe8 requires a transition from mostly 15-credit 'modules' lasting one semester to 30-credit 'units' running for the entire academic year.

- The e-Portfolio will be located in a unit at each level and treated as an assessment point with a significant weight on the overall unit grade. The units have been chosen based on their broad contribution to the student development, e.g. at level 1 the units are 'Fundamentals of Computing' and 'Introduction to Research Methods in Psychology' respectively.
- A detailed specification of the minimum content required in a portfolio will be made available to students. This will include personal development, specific material such as inventories, self-assessments and action plans, and also coursework (and feedback sheets) and reflective work from all units studied. Evidence of meetings with the Personal Tutor is also expected.
- The unit team will brief and provide some online feedback on the construction of the e-Portfolio. Personal Tutors will review and provide feedback on the evolving portfolio in a more intimate face-to-face setting well before the final summative submission (in contrast to the approach taken previously that did not allow for feedback to be acted upon prior to submission).
- Responsibility for the assessment of the final version of the e-Portfolios will lie with the unit team, but Personal Tutors will be involved in moderation and will enhance feedback. Marking criteria have been developed independently by the unit teams.

The implementation of the e-Portfolios in each area also has some distinctive features, for example:

- In Computing, for each unit, the student will do a pre-unit/pre-assessment orientation exercise in which they will consider the topics to be studied, the relevance of these topics to their own personal and career interests, and any prior learning or experience of relevance that they bring. They will also set out personal objectives and identify barriers and strategies for success. At the end of the unit, they will revisit this document and perform a 'post-mortem', evaluating their own approach and identifying lessons. These will be incorporated in a summary reflective essay which completes the portfolio
- In Psychology, the components of the e-Portfolio, e.g. action plans, self-audits, reflective essays, etc. (see above); will be produced by the students within different units. Staff have been invited to examine the new units they have recently designed, and identify the key learning processes that take place in them and potential 'risks'. E-Portfolios are considered as tools that can help deal with these 'risks' and hence support the

achievement of certain aims and objectives of the units.

A common challenge is to ensure that the e-Portfolio covers the complete range of units in a level, not just the specific unit in which it is located and assessed. Another is to ensure that the e-Portfolio is developed from one year to the next. The aim is to have one assessment point in each year of study that requires a submission of the updated portfolio. Ideally, meetings with Personal Tutors should have a well defined agenda of aspects of the portfolio that need to be available for discussion.

Finally, there are still many outstanding issues that require consideration. For instance, there is a tension between, on the one hand, the desire to provide structure that will avoid student confusion and will make the job of the markers easier, and, on the other, the undesirable imposition of a single 'template' or 'house style' that determines the content and the style of the e-Portfolios. Whatever the solution to this problem is, we believe that student ownership must be safeguarded (in the light of 'personalised learning' promoted in CRe8), in order to avoid turning PDP into a purely mechanical process.

### Reference

Atlay, M., Gaitán, A. & Kumar, A. (2008). Stimulating learning – Creating CRe8. In C. Nygaard & C. Holtham (eds.). *Understanding learning-centred higher education*. Frederiksberg: Copenhagen Business School.

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## A year in the life of an e-Portfolio

### Louise Frith, University of Kent

This is the story of an e-Portfolio that was created by an Architecture student at the University of Kent. It plots the life of the e-Portfolio from its creation, as a way to record achievement and support student retention, to its establishment when it was published on the Web. It acts as an example of 'student-led' development, and has future potential as an approach to embedding PDP and the use of e-Portfolios.

The University of Kent's learning and teaching unit (UETL) began to use e-Portfolio software to support students' PDP in Dec 2006. In the summer of 2007 a student from the School of Architecture made an

appointment with a UELT learning advisor. The student felt she was not achieving her full potential and was considering withdrawing from the programme. In the course of conversation with the student the advisor encouraged the student to create an e-Portfolio to record all of her achievements in Stage 1. The process of setting-up an e-Portfolio and recording her achievements enabled the student to realise that, although she had not achieved the high standard she had set for herself, she had made significant progress and should continue with her degree.

*"seeing my work presented in that way and receiving positive feedback from different people gave me more confidence about its value"* (Architecture student).

The student continued to Stage 2, updated her e-Portfolio and published it to the Web. This set off an unintended chain of events. A member of staff at the 'UK resource centre for women in science engineering and technology' (UKRC) discovered the e-Portfolio. The researcher contacted the student for permission to link the e-Portfolio to their site, and encouraged the student to create a blog for their readers to comment on it.

Once linked to the UKRC site the e-Portfolio took on a life of its own, getting 3,500 hits in two weeks from, amongst others, the VC of the University of Kent, the Head of the School of Architecture at Kent and the Director of an international architects' practice based in London. The student was invited to attend and speak at two UKRC events. She has also been asked by the School of Architecture to help embed PDP and e-Portfolios into the curriculum and train students to use e-Portfolios.

*"the experience has opened my eyes to the potential of networking on the Web"* (Architecture student).

This is a very positive story of a year in the life of an e-Portfolio (and its creator). There is a lot to learn from it; firstly, in this case, the act of recording achievement was a powerful method to enable the student to see for herself the progress she was making. Secondly, publishing to the Web had the unexpected outcome of creating a successful method of social networking for the student way beyond her University to the national and international professional sphere. Finally, this whole experience has been an example of a 'student-led' approach to embedding PDP and the use of e-Portfolios.

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## Developing Employer and Employee e-Portfolio Practice

### Aminder Nijjar, The Centre for Recording Achievement

A new HEFCE funded project co-ordinated by the CRA is now underway until February 2010.

The aims of the project are to:

- Provide feedback and evidence to policy makers to ensure the learning and support needs of part-time, discontinuous, work-based learners are taken into account in the implementation of national policy
- Ensure that PDP and e-portfolio practice supports this new and developing group of learners by implementing and evaluating systems and approaches tailored to their particular needs and requirements
- Develop best practice in using e-portfolio technology to support employer and employee engagement in higher level learning

These aims will be achieved through the establishment of a national community of practice of higher education institutions, partner employers, employer trade unions and the CRA. They will work collaboratively to provide evidence, exemplars and technological specifications essential for the development of evidence informed policy and implementation of sustainable structures to support workplace learning and employer engagement with higher education based upon e-portfolio technology.

The Project Partners are:

- University of Bedfordshire
- University of Bradford
- University of Cumbria
- University of Hull
- Leeds Metropolitan University
- University of Leicester
- University of Liverpool
- University of Northumbria
- University of Plymouth
- University of Portsmouth
- University of Wolverhampton
- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
- Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance
- Institute of Physics

The Project Steering Committee constituents are:

- AGR
- CBI
- CILIP
- Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance
- HEA
- HEFCE
- JISC Executive
- Leeds Metropolitan University
- QAA
- UnionLearn
- University of Cumbria

The External Evaluator is David Baume.

The Project Team consists of:

- Rob Ward, Project Director
- Janet Strivens, Project Director
- Helen Richardson, Practice and Literature Reviewer
- Simon Grant, IS Consultant
- Amy Marsden, Project Administrator
- Aminder Nijjar Project Co-ordinator

If you are aware of any relevant current practice, please contact Helen Richardson at [helen@recordingachievement.org](mailto:helen@recordingachievement.org)

To discuss any aspect of this project please contact Aminder Nijjar at [aminder@recordingachievement.org](mailto:aminder@recordingachievement.org)

Progress updates will be provided in future Newsletters.

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## News and Events:

If you have any news items or events that you wish to publicise in the next issue, please email Laura Fletcher at [laura@recordingachievement.org](mailto:laura@recordingachievement.org) with the details



