

Editorial

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

Welcome back to the new calendar year, and to Issue 16 of our Newsletter, which brings into sharp focus the revised Personal Development Planning Guidelines, a document developed with the active engagement of many in the sector, including those who attended the CRA National Residential Seminar last November. This foregrounds PDP explicitly, and is held both on the CRA and QAA websites.

In going for a slimmed down edition of the new 'QAA Guidelines' some material unavoidably has been moved to new locations, including that presented by Mark Atlay (the answer to Mark's question is 'yes' though this is still – like life – a 'work in progress'). Beyond here we pick up some key themes from the CRA Residential Seminar. The sense of progress noted by Mark is picked up 'on the ground' in the work of Lorraine Weaver and Debbie Holmes, where attention is paid not only to PDP within particular specific modules but also - explicitly - to practice that spans the formal curriculum and draws upon Benchmark skills as a template against which to ensure appropriate coverage and – shared with students – to facilitate planning. The style of Nicola Langton's presentation serves to highlight the continuing challenges of institutional implementation, such as the need for local buy-in and challenges with apparently generic approaches. Cheri Logan's contribution extends this further, highlighting the importance of approaches to recording and presenting for learners in ways which create and engender individual meaning and relevance. This is a key point in a world where purchases of generic systems can be made at institutional level without a great deal of attention to the requirements of subject communities. In another disciplinary context, Matt Mobbs takes us further; into a world where the use of non-institutional e-portfolio tools rather than particular institutional e-portfolio systems prevails, explicitly casting the learner themselves as Portfolio system builder. We look forward to discovering what the students made of it. And finally Tim Farthing reminds us that the students entering our institutions are themselves participating in a changing curriculum structure which may well have a massive knock-on effect on their engagement with our practice. A recent e-mail from a second 14-19 context illustrated this wonderfully, speaking of the Local Authorities 'agreement to use Mahara which will integrate with the

Moodle VLE ... on the ILP side again we have selected a tool ... and are using this quite extensively.' If future students enter HE with five years of such experience our starting points will themselves be radically different!

Good reading!

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Personal Development Planning: Guidance for Institutional policy and practice in Higher Education

Harriet Barnes, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

A recommendation of *Beyond the honours degree classification* (2007), the final report of the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement steering group chaired by Professor Bob Burgess, was the development of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) as the key vehicle for measuring and recording student achievement. It will incorporate the content of the current academic transcript as set out in the *Guidelines for HE Progress Files* (2001) and, as described by Mark Atlay in the last issue of PDP and e-Portfolio UK, a number of HE institutions are currently undertaking trials of the process of producing the HEAR. The *Beyond the honours degree classification* report also recommended that revised and updated information for institutions on the other element of progress files - processes for PDP – be updated. Work on this element of the *Guidelines* has also been underway. The result is



Personal development planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice in higher education. The revision has been carried out under the guidance of a QAA-chaired advisory group, comprising representatives of Universities UK, GuildHE, NUS, the Higher Education Academy and the Centre for Recording Achievement as well as institutional practitioners. Feedback has also been collected from delegates at the CRA residential event, initially as to the overall direction the revision should take, and most recently on the almost-final draft text.

The *Guidance* is intended to help higher education providers develop and enhance their PDP policies and processes for students. It is aimed at institutional senior management, but is also intended to be of value to PDP practitioners. In revising the text of the original *Guidelines*, the advisory group has taken account of the changing nature of the UK higher education, in particular the increasingly embedded place of PDP within institutional activities. The *Guidance* draws upon existing practice and the evidence base for the benefits of PDP to students, staff and institutions and sets out key actions at institutional and operational levels which contribute to effective implementation. A summary of the sources which have informed the revision are available from the CRA website.



PDP and Subject benchmarks – are we making progress?

Mark Atlay, University of Bedfordshire

In order to inform the development of the revised guidance on Personal Development Planning (PDP) we undertook a review of references to PDP within subject benchmark statements (for the full report see <http://www.recordingachievement.org/downloads/PDPandSubjectBenchmarksReview.pdf>). The purpose being to explore whether PDP, as a national initiative, had been addressed by those writing or revising the benchmark statements (most had been written or undergone revision since PDP was first introduced) or that that the PDP initiative would have raised awareness of this dimension of 'graduateness'.

In total 54 undergraduate honours subject benchmarks (as of July 2008) were examined for reference to the following key words: PDP; Personal; Plan; Reflection; and Career. Although most (but not all) benchmarks used these words; context is important and they are only taken to refer to PDP if they imply a structured

and supported process in line with the definition emphasising process as well as outcome.

What was pleasantly surprising was the number of benchmarks which explicitly address PDP related issues. Five benchmarks refer to personal development plans/planning or records explicitly and six others refer to personal development in the abstract. An attempt has been made to classify the benchmarks according to the extent of engagement with PDP principles although any such ranking is largely subjective. The resulting categorisation is shown in the following table.

Emphasis (is broadly):	N	%
Personal, educational and career development and process	9	17
Personal and/or educational development and process	16	28
Educational development	18	34
Limited or no mention	11	21
Total	54	

Two subject benchmarks stand out for the manner in which they explicitly address the **personal**, **educational** and **career** development aspects of the definition. Firstly *Agriculture, forestry, agricultural sciences, food sciences and consumer sciences*. This benchmark explicitly addresses PDP and identifies standards at three levels (emphasis is placed here on the differences)

- develop **some** skills necessary for self-managed and lifelong learning (e.g. independent study, time management, organisational skills). (*third class*)
- develop **the** skills necessary for self-managed and lifelong learning (e.g. independent study, time management, organisational skills); (*mid second class*)
- develop the skills necessary for self-managed and lifelong learning (e.g. independent study, time management, organisational skills) **to an enhanced level**. (*first class*)

and

- **recognise** personal strengths and weaknesses. (*third*)
- **analyse** personal strengths and weaknesses. (*mid second*)
- analyse personal strengths and weaknesses **and take account of them**. (*first*)

Secondly, the subject benchmark for *Music* which is particularly interesting for the manner in which it addresses PDP issues in relation to the nature of employment for musicians:

- self-motivation: to practise, take on new repertoires, create a freelance career, acquire new skills, initiate career moves, continue to learn and explore, and keep abreast of developments in an ever-changing profession
- self-critical awareness: monitor and assess abilities, realistically review career path, and reflect on achievements

- the ability to respond positively to self-criticism and to the criticism of others while maintaining confidence in one's own creative work
- understanding one's own learning style and work regimes: constructing one's own timetable, ensuring adequate preparation, and meeting deadlines
- ability to work independently and in isolation: ensuring continued individuality, building upon established technique, continuing research, and ensuring personal welfare
- time management and reliability: making the most of every opportunity and ensuring consistency of achievement
- organisational skills: prioritising and managing
- problem-solving skills: reacting to new situations, decoding information and ideas, dealing with complex situations, and finding ways of working with others under pressure
- awareness of spiritual and emotional dimensions, ensuring continuing creativity and balancing self-expression with external constraints
- financial and business awareness: the ability to implement career management skills, personal presentation, and knowledge of the business aspects of music
- entrepreneurship: identifying and exploiting opportunities.

For details of how your subject matches up against the PDP guidelines, see the full report. Overall the review demonstrated that some significant progress has been made in highlighting PDP principles in subject benchmark statements although there is some way to go to ensure that this is widespread.

Personal Development Planning based on subject-specific QAA benchmark skills

**Lorraine Weaver and Debbie Holmes,
University of Worcester**

The Biological Sciences tutors at the University of Worcester have developed a Personal Development Planning scheme based on QAA Biosciences graduate and transferable skills. It contains a number of elements which run from induction week through to a Capstone module at level 6. Personal tutorials play a major role and can no longer be avoided by the students.

Induction week

The students are introduced to PDP, review their current skills and attributes and develop study skills e.g. scientific writing.

Mandatory modules

In specific mandatory modules, the assessment is linked to attendance at two personal tutorials each

semester. Failure to complete this results in failing the module. These modules also include engagement with the careers service.

Personal tutorials

As well as the general supporting role, these are now linked to PDP. Sessions include discussion of the feedback on marked work, personal academic planning, and reviewing the PDP portfolio. These tasks are structured to enable the students to develop throughout the course. They also link into a tightly organised route for preparation of a dissertation.



All modules

In all of our Biological Sciences modules the students are provided with the opportunity to develop an extensive range of skills and attributes and we wanted a system which would 'capture' all of these. Only some of them map against the QAA Biological Sciences benchmark statements. Several are core to all our modules, e.g. 'apply subject knowledge and understanding to address familiar and unfamiliar problems', and anyone graduating with an honours degree, where biological science is a significant component (single honours, major), will have been offered the opportunity to develop these skills. Others are covered in fewer modules.

In each module some skills and attributes are formally assessed and evidence of attaining these is provided in written feedback.

Our courses contain a great deal of practical and field work and we wanted the students to recognise and record those skills which are not formally assessed; for example, use of a Gilson pipette or electrophoresis equipment or the ability to use a key to identify grasses. The evidence to confirm that the students have had the opportunity to develop these skills or attributes is given in the form of slips which are kept in the portfolio. We regard this informal evidence as very important and feel that evidencing these skills will help the students when applying for skills based employment.

Capstone module

At level 6 there is a mandatory capstone module which enables the students to review their portfolio, to reflect on the knowledge and skills which have been obtained during their biological education, to prepare a CV and partake in a simulated interview situation. These form a major part of the assessment for this module.

Other resources

Students may make use of other resources whilst on the course; for example, additional skills training in study skills or IT. They may take part in clubs or societies and have specific responsibilities or develop additional skills and attributes, and they may have work or home responsibilities outside of university. Details of these should also be included in the PDP portfolio.

This PDP scheme gives us an opportunity to assess the skills and attributes expected of a biological sciences graduate and allows the students to decide, from the start of their course, which skills and attributes they need to develop in order to attain the next step in their degree and in preparation for their employment.

For details of this scheme, please contact Lorraine Weaver

l.weaver@worc.ac.uk or Debbie Holmes
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iLearn@Reading: Adapting Blackboard to support student (and staff) engagement in PDP. The journey so far...

Nicola Langton, University of Reading

We have a number of excellent resources to support PDP at Reading including the Personal Tutor system, Study Advisers, and the Careers Advisory Service. iLearn – a personalised learning space on Blackboard – is being developed as an additional tool to support PDP by providing information on various resources, and the iLearn portfolio tool including preloaded templates and a skills and attributes confidence-rating Individual Learner Profile (ILP). iLearn is being rolled

out gradually, starting with all Part 1 students in September 2008. The iLearn portfolio tool encourages students to create and share portfolios for any purpose and record achievements and reflections on experience and development that support future job applications. If shared, portfolios will also help Personal Tutors write effective student references.

The CRA Conference in November 2008 offered the opportunity to obtain feedback on these initial iLearn and portfolio developments. The workshop was well attended and the participants were very supportive and enthusiastic about our efforts, providing useful feedback and suggestions for future developments.

Part 1 briefly addressed why Reading uses Blackboard to support PDP and illustrated how iLearn brings together good practice and resources to support and point Part 1 students in the right direction. Attendees discussed how PDP generally is 'delivered' in their institutions and whether there were any institutional constraints on the support tools that could be used. Feedback included:

- Some institutions face similar constraints as to what support tools can be used;
- PDP is 'delivered' in many different ways including Careers and academic collaborations, central support/ frameworks in collaboration with various services for Departments to deliver; supported Departmental initiatives etc;
- Centrally-led PDP must be flexible and supportive of local/ disciplinary needs to encourage academic buy-in.

Part 2 provided a brief overview of why the Blackboard portfolio tool has been enhanced to support PDP via the Personal Tutor system at Reading. A slide show illustrated what these enhancements are and how it is now easier to create and share portfolios using the embedded generic templates, ILP and online help. Attendees discussed what modifications they have had to make to their portfolio tools, and the potential issues students and staff might have with engaging with the iLearn portfolio tool. Feedback indicated

- Most attendees indicated that no modifications have been made yet, but that some are now needed;
- Blackboard portfolio users had also added generic templates and were increasingly integrating more discipline-specific templates;

- Potentially prescriptive generic templates can deter students' engagement if it appears the portfolios cannot be easily personalised;
- Most attendees expressed an interest in a 'show and share' workshop on portfolio developments and some were interested in trying out the iLearn portfolio tool.

Part 3 involved brief discussions about promoting ownership of PDP processes and tools and adapting tools or content to meet specific needs; the potential role of Web 2.0 social tools to promote reflection etc. The feedback was most useful and included:

- Strategies for promoting ownership of PDP could include central employability initiatives, collaborative work with Heads of LTA to link PDP to progression, collating evidence of effectiveness, linking PDP to mentoring schemes etc;
- Web 2.0 social tools can be used instead of or in conjunction with institutional or commercial portfolios if used well;
- Students using Web 2.0 tools need guidance in managing their digital identities

If you would like more information about this session, would like to find out more about our portfolio developments, wish to share practice etc, please contact n.langton@reading.ac.uk.

e-Portfolios for Art, Design and Media

Cheri Logan, University of Cumbria

The research reported on at the Centre for Recording Achievement 8th Residential seminar addressed the following questions, deriving the answers and conclusions shown below.

Is subject difference a factor in the use and uptake of e-Portfolios?

Crucial differences emerged between the ways in which those in art, design and media (ADM) contexts construed the concept of portfolios and the generally accepted idea of the e-portfolio. These differences rest on well-established traditions in art and design education and practice, and one respondent commented that:

"The idea of a portfolio is now less clearly defined than it was, and it's only the question of what it is to be used for that helps clarify the issue" (University Tutor)

Findings indicated that the 21st century art, design and media portfolio is hybrid, reflecting the diverse drivers

underpinning e-portfolio developments and the expanded range of media available for production

The range and limitations of digital media became a significant theme in the research, and ADM stakeholders were not convinced that digital media could fulfill all representational needs involved in pursuing these disciplines. For example, they thought that qualities associated with sense-based understandings were likely to be lost in a digital environment – such as "Feeling the weave and the drape of fabric." Respondents also thought that the formal issues involved in an artefact and its representation constituted "two different things" so the authentic experience of a creative artefact was not easily reproducible. Most e-portfolio software imposes semantic structure on the content that users provide, limiting the expression of creativity that is so significant for ADM students, so rather than an e-portfolio the concept of a virtualized portfolio was preferred, and is seen as particularly helpful in providing convenience of communication.

What do stakeholders perceive to be the functions and benefits of e-Portfolios?

Tutor and student experiences of both in-house and commercial software indicated that these generic tools cannot serve the range of activities involved in ADM disciplines. While many institutions were attempting to introduce software packages of a generic kind for e-portfolio purposes, there was evidence of resistance to this from ADM students and some staff. Resistance on behalf of students lies in the belief that e-portfolio software adds little to their subject-specific development and achievements, and is merely "another layer of technology" to be learned and used.



However, there was strong evidence of student engagement with a wide range of technologies for learning and evidencing achievement, and this engagement depended increasingly on a sense of ownership and autonomy in use. These conditions stimulated creative use for learning and seamlessness in the integration of traditional, established technology and innovative digital technology. Personalisation of learning in ADM

included the ability to personalise all technologies in use.

The virtualized portfolio was recognised by ADM stakeholders as increasing the ability to communicate widely about student achievements, address wider global audiences and increase individual visibility in the professional context. For job-seeking graduates, the accepted format for submission of work to employers has become email with file attachments, with interviews and portfolio following. No evidence was found to suggest that employers wanted to see standardized e-portfolios; however e-portfolio packages were shown to provide a site for students to translate their personal creative ideas into a discourse suitable for describing their skills to employers. ADM students were sensitive to employer expectations and projected this into the development of a professionally-oriented portfolio. There was evidence that they provided peer support and constructive critique to one another during this process, with evident advantages for learning and for professional development.

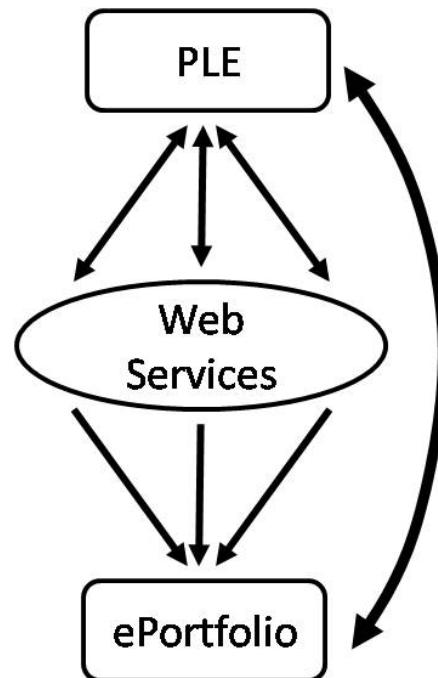


Figure 1

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

Matt Mobbs, University of Leicester

The years undergraduate students spend in higher education are a relatively short period of time in their lifelong learning journey, throughout which they will carry out personal and professional development planning (PDP). With this in mind, a project based at the University of Leicester set out to find a series of tools that will equip students to construct an 'e-Portfolio for life'.

The project was an investigative study into a number of non-institutionalised online environments to find the best tools that would give students a platform for lifelong PDP. The project write-up and research finding can be found at <http://pleuol.wetpaint.com>.

This approach to PDP uses what is known as 'Cloud computing', this means storing personal information online in the 'Web cloud'. The project concluded that the students required three types of online environment for this:

- **Personalised Learning Environment (PLE): an environment that can be tailored to the user's requirements and used to maintain all the other environments.**
- **Web Services: used to collate developmental evidence.**
- **e-Portfolio: used to reflect upon this evidence.**

These environments are intrinsically linked, as shown in Figure 1. The Web services and e-Portfolio are maintained from the PLE and the Web services feed directly into the e-Portfolio, providing evidence.

Personalised Learning Environment

The PLE is a single-login platform from which the Web services and e-Portfolio can be updated. As the name suggests it can be personalised to the user's requirements.

The platform recommended by the project was Netvibes (www.netvibes.com), however there are other adequate environments that could be used like iGoogle (www.google.com) or PageFlakes (www.pageflakes.com).

Web Services

The Web services are distributed in the 'Web Cloud' and can be used to collate developmental evidence, some examples investigated include:

- **Micro-blogging services:** enable the student to record 'snapshot' evidence of development. The service the project found most appropriate for this was Twitter (www.twitter.com) which is also a Social Networking service. Within a Social Network users can 'follow' one-another's postings and offer peer support.
- **Social Bookmarking:** enables users to store their favourite Website's URLs online and to create a self constructed organisational system using 'tags'. The social element of this enables users to share their bookmarked sites with a network of peers, making it easier to accumulate an extended collection of developmental sites. The service the project found most appropriate for this was del.icio.us (<http://delicious.com/>).

Other examples of services investigated can be seen on the project's Website.

e-Portfolio

The e-Portfolio platform the project selected had to fulfil a number of requirements, including:

- easily maintainable and manageable;
- assessable by course tutors;
- easy to integrate the evidence collected in the Web services.

The environment thought most suitable for this was a Wiki. Wikis are environments that are easy to edit using an intuitive user interface and can be expanded as required. Furthermore they have the required capabilities of an e-Portfolio system such as, uploading and storing files like a CV.

The Wiki tool the project utilised was Wetpaint (www.wetpaint.com) as it fulfilled all the project's criteria especially the integration of evidence. This was achieved by embedding RSS feeds from the various Web services into the Wiki. An RSS feed is an output from a Website that informs of any updates that have been made to that Website (Web service). It is also this technology that allowed tutors to assess student e-Portfolios, as tutors could subscribe to the RSS feed from Wetpaint.

The outcomes of this project have recently been put into practice within a course programme to teach students the skills required to use these various technologies as part of the PDP process. This was delivered to all first year Biological Science students in the 2008 intake at the University of Leicester as part of a Key Skills Module.

This new and innovative approach to PDP process equipped students with the tools and skills which would be useful and effective throughout their learning journey at the University of Leicester and beyond.

A quick guide to the latest 13-19 developments – follow up to the workshop at the CRA conference in November 2008

Tim Farthing, VESA

At the CRA conference in November 2008, Bill Leivers and Tim Farthing from the VESA 13-19 Education Support Agency in Leicestershire delivered a workshop on the latest developments in the 13-19 reform programme.

In the autumn of 2008, the government published "Delivering 14-19 Reform: Next Steps". This is the latest in a series of documents that sets out the routemap towards a coherent 14-19 phase that meets the needs of all learners. This article, in common with the CRA conference workshop, aims to provide a very

broad overview of some of the main developments and proposals:

Three clear goals are set out in Next Steps:

- To ensure that all young people participate in learning until their 18th birthday. This will be achieved by 2015.
- To provide all young people with the knowledge and skills that they and the economy need to prosper in the 21st century.
- To close the achievement gap so that all have an equal opportunity to succeed.



The document goes on to describe "an entitlement to the right learning opportunities and support for all young people aged 14-19" and sets out the notion of a more coherent and streamlined qualification system organised into 4 "routes":

- Apprenticeships;
- Diplomas;
- Foundation Learning Tier;
- General Qualifications (GCSEs, A-levels)

Underpinning all of these routes will be the opportunities to develop wider skills including "functional skills" [English, Maths and ICT] and "personal, learning and thinking skills" [now commonly known as PLTS]. It is these wider skills which are deemed to be of generic importance to all learners in working and adult life in the future and is probably one of the main areas which PDP practitioners and CRA members will be interested in exploring further.

The new Diplomas are now being "rolled out" in a phased fashion following on from the launch in 2008 with all areas delivering the full Diploma entitlement by 2013. The Foundation Learning Tier is currently in a pilot phase with a full national roll out intended from September 2010.

Next Steps also recognizes that for young people to engage as successful learners right through the 14-19 phase, they will need the right support. This will include high quality information, advice and guidance [IAG] that will cover all of the options within the 4 routeways described above. The offer will be publicized through the local on line Learning Prospectus to be available in each area and this will need to be under-pinned by an electronic common application system and individual learning plan. Support to learn through personal tutors should also be available and additional personal support will be offered to vulnerable young people who are at risk of becoming "NEET" [Not in education, employment or training]

Significant parts of the document are given offer to describing the infrastructure that will be required locally, regionally and nationally to deliver this challenging reform programme. One of the main thrusts in this regard is the renewed impetus being given to local 14-19 partnerships who have the main responsibility for ensuring the entitlement is in place in each local area. Local authorities have been given a key role in both the planning and commissioning of 14-19 provision.

So, there is a great deal to be done in a relatively short space of time and Local Authorities and their 14-19 partners are busy grappling with the implications of the Next Steps publication. They are either already engaged in delivering the reforms whilst at the same time planning for the next stages in the roll-out. PDP practitioners and CRA members, particularly those in HE, might already be engaged in 14-19 planning in their local areas. HE engagement is a particularly high priority for 14-19 partnerships and strong efforts are being made to establish these links in most areas across the country.

Copies of the full publication can be downloaded or ordered from www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

Further useful sources of information about the 14-19 reform programme can be found at:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/>

http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_20891.aspx

News and Events:

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

Proposed Events for 09/10:

June 2009

Members Only Seminar

This is a one day event free of charge available to members only, for further information please contact Cath Hewson on 01942 826 761 or email Cath@recordingachievement.org

July 2009

The Power of Two

Career Management and Development: making the most of Personal Development Planning (PDP)

**15th July 2009, 10.30a.m. – 3.30p.m.
University of Leicester**

This joint CRA/AGCAS event, the fourth in an annual series, will:

- Showcase a range of practice which seeks to ensure students undertaking PDP gain maximal advantage when it comes to career thinking, management and development;
- Recognise key links between PDP, CPD, graduate development and lifelong learning;
- Provide the opportunity for networking.

For further information please contact Amy Marsden on 01942 826 761 or email Amy@recordingachievement.org

November 2009

The Ninth Residential Seminar of the Centre for Recording Achievement

**26th and 27th November 2009
Chancellors Hotel and Conference Centre, Manchester**

Further details and the programme will be circulated shortly. Places at this event will be limited so please make a note in your diary now.

For further information please contact Amy Marsden on 01942 826 761 or email Amy@recordingachievement.org