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A toolkit for enhancing
personal development planning
strategy, policy and practice in
higher education institutions

A toolkit for enhancing personal development planning strategy, policy and practice in higher education institutions

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Foreword

QAA Scotland is delighted to have sponsored the development of this Toolkit, which forms part of its work with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) to support the implementation and development of personal development planning (PDP) in higher education institutions in Scotland.

The Toolkit is designed to help staff at all levels within institutions to consider, reflect upon and develop their strategies and policies for the implementation and enhancement of PDP. It achieves this by identifying the key areas where PDP might be useful within institutions and encourages staff to reflect upon the important implementation and development issues using self-assessment questions (SAQs). This work follows from and builds upon previous work of colleagues to develop the Effective Learning Framework (ELF), which aimed to locate PDP processes in a wider ELF.

QAA Scotland will continue to work with the HEA and CRA to support institutions in working with the Toolkit, and to evaluate and refine its effectiveness. QAA Scotland will also lead on work to investigate the role of PDP in the support of students undergoing educational transitions across the different levels of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The joint QAA-HEA-CRA PDP Scottish Forum will continue to meet, to continue its work in this area.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the project, in particular the project team and those who contributed so effectively to the various workshop discussions at the PDP Forum and the CRA residential conference.

Norman Sharp OBE
QAA Scotland

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Summary

This Toolkit is intended to support institutional reflection on implementation of personal development planning (PDP). Strictly speaking, institutions cannot reflect. However, various groups within them can, acting on behalf of various stakeholders both within and outwith the institution. It is this range of groups that the resource is designed to assist, and it is therefore structured with a 'stranded' approach in mind, by which we mean that different groups will wish to engage with different 'Aspects', in different ways and at different times. The Toolkit is written for a Scottish context and particularly targeted at a Scottish audience, but could easily be more widely applied.

The approach is based on a series of self-assessment questions (SAQs) aimed to promote reflective practice and thereby enhance PDP provision. We have focussed on 14 aspects of PDP, each with a set of related self-assessment questions and an associated Commentary. We have provided recommendations on how the Toolkit might be used, which include potential approaches for institutions to consider and a mapping table which indicates which aspects might be of special interest to particular stakeholders.

The Toolkit is designed to complement QAA's publication *Personal development planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice* (QAA, 2009). That document provides an informative summary of the history of PDP in UK higher education from the Dearing and Garrick reports in 1997 to the Burgess report in 2008. It also includes a range of sources of information for those new to the field. We have assumed that readers are familiar with PDP, so we do not reproduce that material and only refer to the sources if they are directly relevant to a specific PDP aspect.

We thank all those who helped in the preparation of this resource, hope users find the Toolkit helpful. QAA Scotland will be happy to receive feedback on both its content and use, please contact Heather Gibson.

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Introduction

Background to the project

This Toolkit came into being as a result of a consultancy project sponsored by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Scotland, developed in association with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in Scotland and the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA).

The project had the following brief:

- to enable higher education institutions (HEIs) to analyse and evaluate their teaching and learning strategies in respect of the implementation of personal development planning (PDP)

- to complement the revised UK-wide PDP guidance document (QAA, 2009)

- to reflect the culture of quality enhancement operating in Scottish higher education (HE).

This led to the following aims and objectives:

- to provide a practical means of enhancement in the design, development and implementation of PDP

- to provide clarity on the process of implementing PDP

- to emphasise the central importance of PDP-type activities (such as action planning and reflection) to the process of effective student learning.

The Consultancy Team considered various models for a resource and, after consultation with the sector, opted for a Toolkit based on reflective self-assessment questions. This fits well with the ideas underpinning the Effective Learner Framework (ELF) (QAA, 2007), working at the level of institution and teaching unit.

Consultations took place during 2008 and included interactive meetings with the QAA Scotland/CRA/HEA Scottish PDP Forum, the Scottish Employability Co-ordinators Group and workshop participants at the 8th CRA Residential Seminar. These discussions resulted in changes to the scope and approach adopted and the team is very grateful to all who provided feedback and acted as critical friends.

The Toolkit in relation to the QAA Scotland Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF)

The title of this Toolkit implies that it might be used to enhance institutional provision via reflection at various levels. What it 'says on the tin' fits well with the enhancement ethos of quality assurance within the Scottish HE sector and that is indeed how it is hoped it will be used.

The QEF is predicated on a continuous process of institutional improvement based on self-evaluation and reflective analysis. Among other things, this process is reviewed through consideration of annual institutional reports on internal reviews of taught provision and periodic enhancement-led institutional review. In relation to PDP, both of these approaches might incorporate the Toolkit into the process, whether as part of deliberations preceding programme evaluation or as part of reflective analysis at institutional level.

One of the Quality Enhancement Themes in the QEF dealt with the First Year Experience, and this initiative included a project and report on *Personal Development Planning in the First Year* (Miller et al, 2008) which might be considered as background reading to support the use of this Toolkit.

The Toolkit in relation to different institutional PDP practices and different stakeholder groups

From the outset, consultations with the sector reinforced the view that, to be successful, the Toolkit needed to be capable of accommodating a wide range of models of PDP operation. This was true not only when considering the differing approaches across Scottish and other UK HEIs, but also when allowing for the range of PDP 'frameworks'[1] employed in different discipline units within an institution.

Experience, coupled with informal reviews of the published literature, indicates that there are three key ways in which PDP frameworks may be focussed:

1   with a personal tutor scheme
2   with career planning activities
3   with academic/study skills and/or recorded learning achievement
     (for example, portfolios).

Any given framework may involve a mix of these orientations and the focus may change developmentally within the curriculum. For further discussion, see Aspect B: model, design and branding, page 16.

Clearly, the Toolkit needed to be sufficiently flexible to allow for such diversity both among and within institutions and over time. This constraint favoured a model in which reflective questions could be selected from within an institution according to perceived requirements at any given stage of development.

It was also anticipated that the Toolkit would be used by different groups of stakeholders. In most institutions, different groups consider PDP strategy, policy and practice, while other sets of staff may be involved in design of resources, embedding within the curriculum and student support (see table 1 on page 10). Sometimes these groups overlap in personnel, but even so, their functional focus differs in different situations. This factor drove the Toolkit towards a model in which the PDP territory was

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[1]   After debate, the term 'PDP framework' was agreed by sector representatives to be the least loaded of a range of terms like 'scheme', 'model' and so on. It is used in this Toolkit to refer to all aspects of PDP delivery within an institution or a teaching unit (see also glossary entry on page 77).

divided into a set of aspects which could be considered singly, or in groups, by appropriate stakeholders. The resulting segregation of content is acknowledged as synthetic, and its underlying connectedness can be seen from the frequent cross-referencing that is required. Nevertheless, it has been assumed that there would be pragmatic value in groups focusing on a specific range of issues at any given time.

Title	Description
Policy makers and managers	Included in this group is anyone whose role in PDP is to create and develop policy and to manage planning and delivery. This group includes senior academic managers (for example, vice principals in the Scottish HE sector) with responsibility for learning and teaching, educational development and/or quality enhancement, but also, depending on the level of devolvement of responsibility, for aspects of PDP within the institution: heads of faculties/colleges: and deans/departmental heads.
PDP developers	This includes members of teams having the remit to design and maintain the overarching PDP framework for an institution or discipline. In this Toolkit, the role is treated as distinct to that of learning technologist (see below). Such a team may be drawn from both academic and support staff, but the common feature is the specialised 'design brief'.
Academic staff	This category includes those involved in planning and practice for PDP at the programme (degree) and module levels, including curriculum design, setting learning objectives, and assessment, where used. It includes staff with roles as programme leaders, members of teaching teams, and individual staff and tutors involved in induction, delivery and support.
Learning technologists	This relatively specialised grouping, which is not relevant in some cases, relates to staff whose role in this context is to design and maintain the software and hardware associated with e-portfolios used as part of PDP, including online resources.
Careers and/or employability staff	This group includes what may or may not be two distinct sets of post-holders, with the common factor being an interest in the employability and employment aspects of PDP. Both sub-groups may also be involved in the design process, and in the induction and support of students taking part in PDP.

Quality review teams	This group name is shorthand for those involved in evaluation and review of PDP policy and implementation at institutional and programme levels. It could include, for example, internal teams involved in QAA Scotland's Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) process, staff creating and monitoring learning and teaching strategies and plans, and those involved in internal periodic programme review and annual programme monitoring processes.
Educational developers	This group includes all those who have a role in disseminating PDP-related policies and information and thereby in assisting staff and tutors to develop awareness, understanding and skills relating to PDP.
Students and their representatives	This group includes those who take part in PDP or represent those who do, and who may be involved in the design and development process via evaluation and feedback. In many respects, therefore, the primary stakeholders in PDP.
PSBs and employers	Professional and statutory bodies (PSBs) differ in their interest in PDP but may provide guidelines linked to vocational continuing professional development (CPD) schemes or review PDP implementation as part of the accreditation process. Employers may have an interest in PDP insofar as associated portfolios and CVs may provide information about students and their ability to reflect and self-develop.

Table 1: key stakeholder groups involved in PDP strategy, policy and practice[2]. Terms may vary in different institutions and there will almost certainly be multiple or combined roles for individuals in any given case.

[2] This listing can be used to amplify the titles used in table 2 on page 10 to denote groups with specific interests in PDP.

The structure and focus of the Toolkit

The 14 aspects of PDP that are covered are:

A: strategy and planning for implementation
B: model, design and branding
C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement
D: promotion and introduction
E: engaging academic staff
F: engaging undergraduate students
G: embedding PDP and the discipline context
H: assessing PDP activities
I: support for reflection and action planning
J: progression and academic development
K: benefits for students
L: employability and employment
M: lifelong learning, CPD and portability
N: engaging postgraduate students and postdoctoral staff.

For each aspect, there is:

- a brief introduction
- between 10 and 17 self-assessment questions (SAQs) related to practical aspects of implementing PDP within the area covered by the aspect
- a commentary.

The SAQs are presented under 'sub-aspect' headings, as appropriate. Within each aspect, cross-references to cognate aspects are provided. In addition, five key strategic SAQs are identified to assist focused discussion in relation to wider issues of planning and implementation, for example, in situations where an institutional policy needs to be determined or reviewed. These sub-headings, cross references and key strategic questions should be regarded as indicative only.

A commentary is also provided for each aspect. This is intended to provide relevant background, raise operational matters that need to be considered, support any contentions made either in the introduction or the SAQs and highlight certain issues that might arise from consideration of the aspect. The commentaries are not intended to be comprehensive academic reviews of the area, but rather short synopses that should aid interpretation of the aspect and the SAQs and which may have value in supporting workshop events. It is acknowledged that the views expressed are mainly subjective on the part of the Consultancy Team. Accordingly, the style is informal in nature, and the references and quotes highly selective. Readers requiring a comprehensive review of any specific topic should seek this elsewhere.

In the process of compiling the SAQs and seeking feedback on drafts, it became evident that many of the terms used are capable of multiple interpretations and that

institutional terminology may differ radically. A glossary has therefore been included on page 75 that provides the interpretation favoured by this team and against which institutional 'translations' of terms might be made. Even the acronym 'PDP' has different interpretations - here it is taken to mean the process of personal development planning rather than any of the other possible meanings.

The focus of the Toolkit is primarily on undergraduate PDP because that is currently the predominant context for most users. However, in recognising that postgraduate PDP was a developing area of interest, a supplementary Aspect (N, page 66) has been included related to this topic. Its position at the end of the Toolkit reflects more the fact that the content of the other aspects is orientated towards undergraduate practice rather than any inference that PDP is less relevant to this group, or to institutions in developing PDP for this group. Users focusing on this aspect should find that many generic topics in the resource are applicable to the needs of this diverse group.

How to use the Toolkit

There is no intention to be prescriptive about the use of the Toolkit. Nevertheless, it has been constructed with several underlying notions about usage that have influenced its structure.

It was clear during consultations that potential users felt that the full involvement of academic staff was an important prerequisite to successful PDP implementation (Aspect E: engaging academic staff, page 28). Several commented that they would like to see outline suggestions about how the Toolkit might be used in practice. The sector was then consulted both on types of stakeholders likely to use the Toolkit and on aspects that each group might consider useful and appropriate to their remit or purpose. Because the names and roles of groups involved in PDP varies considerably across the sector, an explanation of the stakeholder classification is provided in table 1 on page 5.

The 'mapping table' provided in table 2 (page 10) matches these stakeholder groupings with aspects, and hence SAQs. This table is only a guide, as the circumstances for each HEI may dictate different priorities for the stakeholder groups and these may vary with time.

Due to the stranded approach of its design, the Toolkit has the potential to be used with these stakeholders in a variety of ways:

~ as a planning tool for programme teams developing new curricula

~ for quality teams evaluating current curricula

~ by academic managers at all levels aiming to embed the PDP process.

The Toolkit can also be used for development purposes as part of a workshop approach to work with more diverse groups. The aim of any development session will clearly affect the composition of the group and four models are proposed with four different target audiences and four different aims (see Appendix on page 70). Some of these may appeal, and others not, but it is hoped that they will provide examples which can be adapted for a specific institutional context or provide a stimulus for development of bespoke sessions.

Whatever approach an institution takes to use of the Toolkit, a key to achieving success is to ensure that there is constructive alignment between strategy, policy, design, delivery and outcomes.

The 14 aspects of the PDP Toolkit

Together, the aspects form a resource that HE staff can use to evaluate and enhance PDP provision within their institution.

It is not intended that all aspects or SAQs will be relevant to all staff at any given point. To assist with the selection of relevant SAQs as part of a reflective process, the Toolkit:

- provides a guideline mapping table showing the aspects which might be considered important for different stakeholder groups (see table 2 on page 10)

- within each aspect, groups SAQs under subheadings according to common topics

- identifies a sub-set of key strategic SAQs for each aspect which will be of particular relevance to staff considering 'overarching' as opposed to 'practitioner' issues.

Stakeholder interests and roles

Table 2 maps the Toolkit's 14 PDP aspects (columns A–N) against nine stakeholder groups (rows). Red shading = high relevance; blue shading = reasonably high relevance; blank = no shading.

PDP Aspects:
- A: strategy and planning for implementation
- B: model, design and branding
- C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement
- D: promotion and introduction
- E: engaging academic staff
- F: engaging undergraduate students
- G: embedding PDP and the discipline context
- H: assessing PDP activities
- I: support for reflection and action planning
- J: progression and academic development
- K: benefits for students
- L: employability and employment
- M: linking PDP and continuing professional development
- N: engaging postgraduate students and postdoctoral staff

Stakeholder group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
PSBs and employers		Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue			Red	Red	Red	Blue
Students and their representatives	Blue	Red	Blue	Red		Red	Blue	Blue	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Educational developers		Blue	Blue	Red	Red									Blue
Quality review teams	Blue	Blue	Red		Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue		Blue	Red	Blue		Blue
Careers and/or employability staff	Red	Blue	Blue	Red		Red	Blue		Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Learning technologists	Blue	Red	Blue		Blue		Blue						Red	
Academic staff	Blue	Blue	Blue	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Blue	Red		Blue
PDP developers	Red	Red	Red	Blue	Red	Red		Red	Red	Blue		Blue	Blue	Blue
Policy makers and managers	Red	Blue	Red		Red	Red		Blue		Blue		Red	Blue	Red

Table 2: mapping of the Toolkit's 14 PDP aspects against stakeholder groups.
Key: ■ (red) shading indicates that an aspect and its SAQs are likely to be of high relevance, while ■ (blue) shading indicates reasonably high relevance. There is no intended implication from lack of shading that a stakeholder group would never take an interest in that aspect or its SAQs: this may depend on institutional and discipline circumstances.

Acknowledgements

Aspect A: strategy and planning for implementation

An institution's commitment to implementing PDP for its students will be reflected in strategy and planning documents and embedded in policies and procedures. Support for PDP activities is required from senior academic and administrative management. The need for adequate staff time and funding to support and maintain PDP activities should be recognised.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

PDP policy/strategy

A1   How and where is the institution's strategy and/or policy statement on PDP outlined, and is this easily accessible to staff and students?

A2   What does the institution define as PDP activity?

A3   In what ways does the PDP policy reflect the institutional ethos in respect of delegation of organisational responsibility (for example, is the PDP framework organised centrally, or delegated to faculties/colleges or departments/schools or to specific degree programmes)?

A4   How are the needs of all groups of undergraduate and postgraduate students differentiated within PDP strategy/policy and practice? [See also Aspect N: engaging postgraduate students and postdoctoral staff, page 66.]

A5   What is the relationship between the PDP strategy and the model for delivery (for example, do faculties/colleges have the freedom to design their own PDP framework in entirety or do they have limited flexibility within an overarching structure)? [See also Aspect B: model, design and branding, page 16.]

A6   How have the differing requirements of professional and statutory bodies (PSBs) in relation to PDP activity been taken into account?

A7   In what ways are other strategies 'joined up' to the PDP strategy (for example, those related to learning and teaching, e-learning, employability, career planning)?

Management of implementation

A8   What constructive alignment is there between the different aspects of PDP: the strategy, policy, design, delivery and outcomes?

A9   How does the institution review PDP implementation (for example, via a 'PDP management group' or equivalent)? [See also Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement, page 20.]

A10   If a risk analysis has been carried out in relation to delivery of the PDP framework, either at institutional or sub-unit level, what were the results (for example, are PDP activities appropriately staffed and funded)?

A11   What is the nature of support for creating, developing and maintaining the infrastructure required for the PDP framework (for example, software and server support for IT-based frameworks)?

A12   If software and servers used in PDP frameworks fulfil multiple needs (for example, if these also support e-learning), how will the needs of the PDP framework be taken into account when these are reviewed and/or upgraded?

A13   In what ways do student representatives take part in the management of the PDP framework (for example, through representation on a steering group)?

A14   What steps have been taken to ensure that the implementation of the PDP framework meets the institution's legal obligations, for example in areas such as accessibility, equal opportunities and data protection?

A15   How does policy support decision-making to allocate resources and time in workload models to help staff fully support PDP activities?

Commentary

From the outset, it has been apparent that strategy and planning are vital components of successful PDP implementation. Thus, an early phase in the development of the PDP framework(s) for some institutions was the creation of a PDP policy which clarified responsibilities and provided the impetus to adopt PDP as a student activity. The resulting prioritisation of staff effort and other resourcing meant that the necessary support infrastructure could be created (see Jackson, 2003).

The definitive QAA *Personal development planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice* (2009) lays out the following principle of effective practice in relation to strategy, policy and quality enhancement:

Institutions [should] have a strategy and policy framework for the implementation, monitoring and quality enhancement of PDP provision. Such a framework establishes and develops:

- the nature of institutional opportunities for PDP for all learners at all levels

- any appropriate institutional recording and support systems

- the scope for customised practice across programme provision

- the flexibility of policy requirements when extended to students in partner institutions

- appropriate staff development opportunities to support PDP implementation

Factors influencing centralised and devolved policy-making

Many PSBs can point to a long-standing interest in PDP-like reflective practice on the part of students. In some cases, accreditation has been a forceful

'driver' of PDP policy and implementation. This has resulted in faster adoption in certain disciplines (on occasion predating the Dearing and Garrick reports) that needed to be taken into account when developing policies to suit both early and late adopters. This, with other discipline-specific needs (see, for example, Croot, 2001), conflated with the general acceptance of the value of embedding PDP activities in the curriculum (Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context, page 37), has favoured delegation of responsibility to discipline units.

On the other hand, institutions with a history of a 'top-down' management approach, or whose curricula favour cross-unit module choices by students, can be expected to prefer a more holistic approach to PDP. Relevant also is the mode of delivery, which may require substantial institutional investment in bespoke PDP software or e-portfolio systems requiring tailoring by learning technologists. In such cases, policy and decision-making is generally required for 'top-slicing' the funds to pay for centralised software, IT infrastructure and support. This may encourage a unified approach.

Accordingly, two contrasting styles of PDP policy have emerged, with hybrid approaches between: one supporting the development of a centralised PDP 'framework' followed by most or all subunits within the HEI, the other fostering devolvement of responsibility to the discipline subunits for design and implementation of several relatively independent frameworks.

Factors influencing policy to support student engagement and effective learning

As PDP framework(s) have matured, the focus of policy has tended to move towards schemes for embedding PDP to encourage student use. At a QAA Scotland/CRA/HEA workshop held in 2007, participants were asked to rank strategy and policy factors in importance in relation to student engagement with PDP, leading to the results shown in table 3. This can be taken to indicate that, given general acceptance of the Dearing and Garrick recommendations, 'local' policy decisions are considered to be more important for this aspect of PDP than institutional or national factors.

Rank	Factor
1	Policy for embedding PDP within a programme
2	College/faculty/school/departmental PDP or learning and teaching strategy and policy
3	University PDP implementation policy, including mechanism of delivery
4	Other policy factors impinging on student decisions to engage with PDP
5	University learning and teaching strategy
6=	University quality assurance procedures
	External policy decisions and review procedures

Table 3: workshop participant rankings of different policy and strategy factors impacting on student engagement with PDP. Low ranking numbers imply high impact. See Weyers (2007) for full details.

The same workshop group identified further factors that are influential in PDP engagement, all requiring strategy and policy decisions:

- policies that promote student involvement in the initial design and review of the PDP scheme

- the level of study at which PDP was first introduced and how well students engaged at that stage

- whether a personal tutor scheme existed and could support PDP

- the quality of the PDP delivery mechanism (often an e-portfolio tool)

- degrees of security and privacy for students

- employability and/or career planning strategies 'joined up' to PDP

- whether staff valued PDP and whether staff were expected to carry out PDP themselves

- workload issues for students and staff

- relevance to the degree pathway and requirements of accrediting bodies (successful PDP schemes were often present in vocational degree programmes because of links to later CPD schemes within professions).

In tandem with moves to consider these topics, the sector has also been considering how PDP policy can promote effective learning. In this regard, it should be noted that the QAA Scotland-sponsored Effective Learning Framework (ELF) initiative was 'designed to help institutions think about how their own PDP strategies might be developed and help the sector as a whole start to think about what effective learning for students might mean as PDP evolves in the future climate of the enhancement of the student learning experience' (QAA, 2007). This work continues to be developed by the QAA Scotland/ CRA/HEA Scottish PDP Forum.

Aspect B: model, design and branding

There is scope for a variety of interpretations of PDP in terms of underlying model, design and presentational features ('branding'), and in the method of portfolio creation. In developing an institutional PDP framework(s), it is potentially beneficial if there is a good fit between the institutional or discipline ethos, the 'physical' mechanism of delivery (for example, e-portfolio based), and the mechanisms available for support.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Underlying ethos

B1   What is the institutional rationale for the design and presentation of its PDP framework (for example, focused on personal tutors, skills-based, career-orientated or other)?

B2   What evidence is there that the model, design and branding of the PDP framework fit the needs of the institution's students, as assessed by students, staff and potential employers? [See also Aspect K: benefits for students, page 55, and Aspect L: employability and employment, page 60.]

B3   What is the nature of the match between the institutional mission and the ethos of the institutional PDP framework?

B4   How do the institutional PDP framework(s) match to practice in other institutions and 'benchmarking' statements, such as the QAA guidance note (QAA, 2009)?

B5   How are the requirements of professional and statutory bodies integrated into the institutional/departmental PDP framework(s)?

Design and branding

B6   What efforts have been made to ensure that the design of the student-PDP portfolio interface is 'student-friendly' and easy to use?

B7   How does the design of the PDP framework deliver benefits for students in personal, educational and career development?

B8   How does the design of the PDP framework facilitate the embedding of PDP activities in the curriculum?

B9   What mechanisms are used to ensure that the design remains appropriate?

B10   How are student views taken into account in assessing the design and delivery of the PDP framework(s)? [See also Aspect A: strategy and planning for implementation, page 12, and Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement, page 20.]

B11　How have the needs of cohorts experiencing 'alternative' modes of delivery (for example, flexible learning, distance learning) been taken into account?

B12　Are the PDP resources fully inclusive (for example, how have the needs of disabled students been anticipated in the design and accessibility of materials for PDP)?

B13　How have the needs of students articulating from different backgrounds (for example, FE college, international, direct entry) been taken into account?

Coordination of design, branding and delivery

B14　How does the design and branding of the institutional/departmental PDP framework assist in communicating its rationale effectively to staff and to students?

B15　In what ways are staff involved in PDP 'delivery' supported (for example, through training events and branded literature, resources and generic presentations)?

B16　What mechanisms are used for determining whether the delivery, design and branding method remains appropriate?

Commentary

This Commentary assumes that institutions already have established models and associated supporting technology in place, and may be evaluating or developing their model(s). It is important to be able to provide a rationale even for an existing model, because a number of different purposes for PDP have emerged as institutions try to implement the policy of integrating PDP into the academic process.

These different purposes can define whether or not PDP is assessed or where it sits in an institution and whose responsibility it becomes. These are important issues because student and staff engagement can depend on getting these factors right. As Jackson and Ward (2004) commented: 'Different implementation models of PDP aim to achieve different purposes…and there is a need to ensure that there is congruency between the purposes, aims, objectives and intended outcomes and the methods of assessment and criteria used to evidence and assess learning'.

Underlying ethos of different models

Experience, coupled with reviews of published and unpublished information, indicates that there are three main ways in which PDP frameworks may be orientated:

1　with a personal tutor scheme

2　with career planning activities

3　with academic/study skills and/or recorded learning achievement (for example, portfolios).

These different foci can be represented by the points of a triangle, creating a 'PDP Orientation Diagram' (figure 1a). Since most PDP frameworks include aspects of all three approaches, each can be represented by a point on the two-dimensional space so formed. The use of this method to describe three differing approaches within an institution is illustrated in figure 1b. The orientation diagram can also capture

developmental aspects of PDP, such as the way in which the nature of student engagement might progress in time within a particular programme of study, as illustrated in figure 1c.
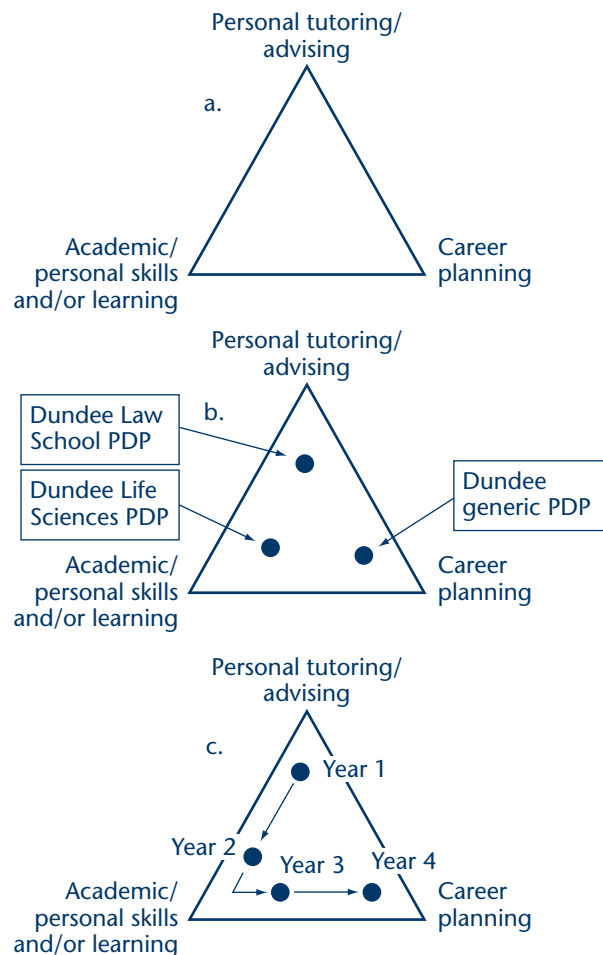

Figure 1: the 'PDP Orientation Diagram'.

a.   A two-dimensional space for describing the orientation of PDP frameworks.

b.   Illustration of the diagram's use to describe three PDP frameworks operating at the University of Dundee. This institution operates an e-portfolio-based PDP framework ('My PDP') that allows for tailoring at the school (department) or programme level through the use of optional templates. Many schools support students in using the University's generic model, which has a strong career-planning focus. The Law School, however, through its LEAP (Law Employability and Professionalism) scheme, has chosen to develop templates that, at least initially, relate to personal tutor activities, while the School of Life Sciences (Learning and Teaching), via its SPELS (Skills and Professionalism in Life Sciences) modules, has decided to promote PDP activities via close links with skills acquisition.

c. Illustration of the diagram's use to convey a developmental route of PDP engagement. This shows a progression through links to personal tutoring in year 1, skills development (years 2 and 3) and finally career planning in the final year (Scottish 4-year honours degree).

An alternative way to define an implementation model is to refer to the 'ideal type' categorisation developed by Clegg and Bradley (2006), namely professional, employment and academic, which they found in various departments in one university. Haigh (2008) found this categorisation helpful in analysing three case studies showing how PDP is being interpreted and implemented differently in different subject disciplines and the benefits and drawbacks of each model:

> 'Clegg and Bradley…found that though no ideal type existed in pure form, each ideal type was associated predominately with different disciplines. For example, in their setting health and educational courses tended to adopt a **professional** model for PDP which focussed on reflection. Sport and Leisure and Engineering courses used an **employment** model which focussed on building up a CV and career management while humanities and social science tended towards the **academic** model which focussed on academic development and meta-cognitive skills'.

Another way of considering implementation relates to the nature of the embedding of PDP activities within the curriculum (Atlay, 2006) and is covered in more detail in Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context, page 37.

User consultation for design and branding

It is expected that an institution will have consulted students and staff during a pilot phase for models currently in use. Because of the diversity of the student population in terms of age, ethnic origin, gender, culture and potential disability issues, it is crucial that usability and accessibility are considered on an ongoing basis, particularly in connection with the technology used, but also with the language used in any associated resources, support needs and the overall design of the model (See also Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement, page 20, regarding tools to assist in evaluating PDP frameworks and their implementation).

A useful checklist, developed by Peters (2006) 'Issues to consider when designing a Progress File System' asks staff (and/or students) to consider and offer their opinions on a series of key issues when designing progress files. It covers the topics of: outcomes, inputs, output, and process implementation issues, and could be used to review the design of a PDP framework.

Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement

Institutions will wish to evaluate their PDP framework(s) in a spirit of continuous enhancement. This might include obtaining feedback from students, staff and external parties such as programme reviewers, external examiners, learned societies, accrediting bodies and employers. Ideally, those providing feedback should be informed of changes made or planned as a result of their comments.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Evaluation and review

C1   What opportunities are there for students to provide feedback on the PDP framework(s) and to shape the PDP strategy?

C2   What opportunities are there for staff to provide feedback on the PDP framework(s)?

C3   How and when are staff and students informed about changes made as a result of their feedback?

C4   How are external examiners asked to comment on the PDP framework(s)?

C5   How is consideration of PDP embedded within annual or periodic module or programme review procedures?

C6   If relevant, what is the nature of appraisal of the PDP framework(s) by review teams for accrediting PSBs?

C7   How and when is PDP considered by appropriate committees with responsibility for learning and teaching?

Quality enhancement

C8   What mechanisms exist within the institution for sharing good practice in PDP?

C9   In what ways are staff development events used to promote and support PDP?

C10 Where relevant, how are links made with the CPD systems offered by representative employers? [See also Aspect M: linking PDP and continuing professional development, page 63.]

C11 How do staff with responsibility for PDP administration and development cross-reference or benchmark internal developments with those elsewhere (for example, by attending sectoral meetings and seminars)?

C12 How have institutional developments been reported externally (for example, as case studies available from the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) or via HEA Subject Centre activity)?

C13   How have institutional PDP developments been reported in the educational or pedagogical literature for HE (for example, in discipline-focused teaching journals)?

C14   In what ways might PDP developments in disciplines be recognised via institutional teaching reward schemes?

Commentary

The principles of effective practice from the QAA *Personal development planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice* (2009), quoted in Aspect A: strategy and planning for implementation, page 12, imply an institutional focus on monitoring and quality enhancement in relation to PDP, including evaluation of the student experience. The expectation is clearly that an institution's policy and strategy in relation to PDP, the way in which this has been implemented, and above all, student views, should all be subject to review and consequential improvement.

Role of external review and institutional reflective analysis

In Scotland, the Government's mechanism for assuring the quality of HE provision (managed via QAA Scotland) is Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR). While PDP is not mentioned explicitly in the second edition of the ELIR Handbook (QAA, 2008) it is likely to be covered within institutional reflective analysis. Within review team reports, it might then be considered within Section 2, Management of the student learning experience, under the topics

- effectiveness of the institution's approach to engaging and supporting students in their learning

- effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting the development of graduate attributes, including those relating to employability, in all of its students.

For the institutional audit of HEIs relevant to England and Northern Ireland, PDP falls explicitly within Section 3, Institutional management of learning opportunities, QAA, 2006a), while for the institutional review relevant to HEIs in Wales it might be covered via the mechanism of thematic trails as selected by the review team (QAA, 2003).

PSBs may also examine the effectiveness of PDP provision via their accreditation process.

An example of a PSB with a long-standing interest in PDP is the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), which accredits over 100 courses in 29 UK universities. Chartered membership of the RTPI for graduates requires the completion of an advanced professional competence log book and new licentiates are expected to compose a professional development plan as part of a general emphasis on CPD within the profession. This ethos is expected to be reflected in analogous arrangements within accredited degree programmes and is scrutinised as part of the accreditation process.

Thus, the RTPI *Policy Statement on Initial Planning Education* (RTPI, 2008) suggests that town planning schools and their degree programmes should foster what should be 'the first stage in what should be a life-long programme of development and acquisition of knowledge and skills', and the Institute's Indicative Learning Outcome 19

states that students should: 'Appreciate the meaning of professionalism…and the importance of a commitment to lifelong learning to maintain and expand professional competence'. There is no prescription regarding method, but in many cases schools adopt some form of PDP as a methodology.

Internal review

HEIs are expected to adhere to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), published by QAA, in relation to assurance of academic standards and quality. Although institutions have a degree of autonomy in how this is interpreted, the precepts of *Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review* (QAA, 2006b) provide guidance on mechanisms that might be used, which include:

- programme and/or module approval processes
- programme and/or module monitoring processes
- internal programme (subject) reviews
- student feedback and evaluation as part of the above.

It is natural that PDP framework(s) and its/their implementation will be covered in the above processes as part of review of the student learning experience and in reviews of related institutional processes concerning the evaluation of progress with institutional and discipline strategy and planning (see Aspect A: strategy and planning for implementation, page 12).

Quality enhancement

PDP has featured in a number of QAA Scotland Quality Enhancement Themes and projects these have initiated, for example:

- The Employability Theme: the paper *Employability: Effective learning and employability* (QAA Scotland, 2007)
- The First Year Theme: the report on *Personal Development Planning in the first year* (Miller et al, 2008).

Graduate attributes are a central component of the Research-Teaching Linkages Quality Enhancement Theme and the role of PDP in reflecting on attributes and skills and in recording/evidencing achievement in this area is obvious (see Aspect L: employability and employment, page 60).

Tools to assist in evaluating PDP frameworks and their implementation

As to methods of evaluation of PDP implementation, two important guides have been published by the CRA (Baume, 2007; Peters, 2007). These were produced in parallel and offer different approaches based on the authors' disciplinary backgrounds and evaluation experience. Baume (2007) cites four reasons to conduct an evaluation:

1   to account for resources committed and outcomes attained

2   to understand why the venture is having the effects that it is having

3   to improve this and future such ventures

4   to develop the capacity of the venture to monitor and evaluate its own practice.

and provides 26 key questions to provide an evaluation strategy for a PDP 'venture'. Peters (2007) structures his guidance around 11 issues:

- Why evaluate now?

- What is the purpose of the evaluation?

- What is the audience for the evaluation?

- Who carries out the evaluation?

- What is the focus of the proposed evaluation?

- What is the scope and scale of the evaluation?

- What is the methodology of the proposed evaluation?

- What are the appropriate methods for collecting evaluation data?

- What other evaluation design issues should be addressed?

- How can the data be analysed?

- What are the issues in presenting the results of evaluations?

and within these headings provides 44 'evaluation guidance questions'. His resource also includes examples of evaluation tools with rationales.

Aspect D: promotion and introduction

Student handbooks, whether PDP-specific or general, are useful vehicles to provide relevant information on PDP frameworks. Pre-entry information can be used to set the context for PDP and may act as an incentive to confirm an application to a specific institution as part of the post-application process. Once students are enrolled, induction to the PDP framework helps to ensure students understand the ethos and systems in use, the intended learning outcomes from PDP-related activities and where and how PDP-related activities might be assessed.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Promotion and marketing

D1   How is the PDP framework advertised or marketed (for example, institutionally or by sub-units, involving posters, handouts, and so on)? [See also Aspect B: model, design and branding, page 16.]

D2   How is the personal development plan and the personal development planning process differentiated when explaining PDP?

D3   In what way is the personal/professional development planning process referred to in your institution? For example, how meaningful might the acronym 'PDP' be to students and staff in your department/school? Is 'doing PDP' regarded as a helpful or unhelpful phrase?

D4   What information is provided to students prior to arrival at the institution (for example, in a prospectus or information pack for potential applicants or confirmed entrants)?

Induction

D5   How does the institution introduce students to its PDP framework(s) (for example, through pre-entry materials, an induction event, or sessions integrated into the curriculum)?

D6   What support is available for students (for example, a specific PDP handbook and/or online support)?

D7   How is PDP covered in institutional documentation, especially that provided to students (for example, module and programme handbooks; module or programme specifications) so that they can gain an impression of how PDP activities will form part of their learning activities?

D8   What is the rationale for deciding who delivers the PDP induction scheme?

D9   Which staff are involved in inducting students in PDP (for example, academic, support services, personal tutors) and what support are they given (for example, a centrally produced 'induction script')?

D10   How is the induction event supported (for example, via literature and websites)?

D11   Where articulation occurs (for example, entry into advanced levels of programmes), how are students prepared for entry into the PDP framework?

Embedding and support

D12   How do programme and module learning outcomes reflect the expected engagement with PDP (for example, is the ability to plan and reflect regarded as an important graduate attribute)? [See also Aspect H: assessing PDP, page 42.]

D13   How are embedded PDP-related activities mapped to the syllabus?

D14   How are students provided with support for ongoing engagement with the PDP framework (for example, via dedicated staff, a central helpdesk, online communication channels, information within the PDP resource itself, written or web-based literature)?

Commentary

It is essential that students and staff have a clear and coherent means of understanding what PDP means for them as individuals, within their discipline context and institutional framework. A consistent approach to the depiction of PDP, integrated into existing effective means of communication, whether paper-based or electronic, can be crucial for effective engagement. A well-designed induction process is also crucial.

Diversity of understanding

A strength and a weakness of the generic definition of PDP, as stated in the *Guidelines for HE Progress Files* (QAA, 2001), is that it is interpreted differently within and between institutions. Other sectors (school, further education and professional employment) may also have different interpretations or similar concepts (SQA, 2004; Robertson, 2005). This diversity of interpretation can aid engagement by allowing individual HEIs to make PDP relevant to their situation; alternatively, it can convey mixed messages about purpose, process and outcomes (Miller et al, 2008).

Process and product

A survey of PDP practice in UK HEIs (Strivens, 2007) found that 83 per cent had implemented PDP in their institution and 75 per cent of those appeared to be using an electronic means to support the process. Confusion can result from the difference between engaging in the process of PDP and recording the outcome (product) via an e-portfolio. (A Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) paper (2005) refers to the importance of taking an inclusive position in the context of e-portfolios). When implementing PDP, differentiating the process from the product may benefit understanding.

Transition issues

Information overload can be an issue on arriving in HE (Harvey and Drew, 2006) and so it is important that any induction to PDP is factored in at an appropriate point and put into a meaningful context. This might include being part of a module, a programme-wide induction to a personal tutor system or built into IT induction on e-portfolios.

Pre-entry is a key stage for effective transition support and PDP has the potential to bridge the gap in a personalised and structured way. On this issue, Whittaker (2008) commented:

> Transition support should be predicated on an enhancement rather than a deficit model, which recognises and builds on the strengths, skills and prior experience of students entering the first year…PDP is clearly an effective means of promoting this approach.

Aspect F: engaging undergraduate students (page 33) also covers related issues.

Promotion - branding and embedding

Practice shows that, even in institution-wide PDP schemes, it is important to allow local customisation or branding for schools/departments to reflect their different approaches. This can enhance ownership by both staff and students, as well as providing a shared means of understanding. A visual representation of the PDP process (a Google search of images [+pdp +personal development planning +ac] gives a selection of samples) can also help understanding, as well as promotion. Communicating the 'brand' to students and staff may be achieved through curriculum mapping (See Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context, page 37).

Support

Miller et al (2008) identified three specific areas of student support needs arising from PDP implementation:

- personal - in relation to appropriate boundaries in terms of personal disclosures
- educational - in relation to specific skills, such as reflection
- technological - in relation to IT literacy.

These needs ought to be strategically considered, with staff available and adequately prepared for induction and ongoing support. Delivering support through partnerships, such as co-delivery for PDP between academic and careers service or employability staff, is one model that could be considered, as conducted at the University of Dundee (CRA, 2007):

> Student induction is provided via tailored didactic sessions delivered jointly by the careers service and academic staff and supported via an eight-page booklet. All the university's colleges have incorporated student PDP activities within the curriculum and aspects of these are increasingly being assessed via shared access to student eportfolio content.

A number of other practical proposals which could be relevant to PDP induction were outlined in the outcomes to QAA Scotland's Enhancement Theme *Responding to Student Needs* (Saich, 2005). For instance, in her chapter on 'Approaches to Integrating Student Support', Saich suggests:

● considering front-loading support to focus on first-year undergraduates

● delivering support through partnerships such as co-delivery and contribution to academic programmes - for example, by integrating study skills, time management and PDP into the curriculum

● considering establishing consultative fora through which students can provide suggestions and feedback on support provision

● developing institutional approaches that can be tailored to local needs, rather than a proliferation of local solutions that may exacerbate existing 'silos' and potentially result in a more complex student experience (particularly where institutions have a flexible, modular structure).

Aspect E: engaging academic staff

The success of a PDP framework depends on the engagement of and the essential value brought to the process by academic staff combined with management support. This could involve the tailoring of PDP activities to a specific discipline context. Often, key features of design and implementation will necessarily be carried out by (central) specialists. However, appropriate student engagement, whether supported by induction, embedding and assessment, or as part of a personal tutor scheme, is likely to require input from lecturing staff. Good practice can be achieved when academic staff are convinced of the potential merits of PDP activities which inevitably vie for curriculum space with other discipline-related content and learning outcomes and fully align their teaching and academic support with the aims of PDP in their institutional context.

Self-assessment questions:

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Staff responsibilities

E1   How do you know if relevant staff understand their role and responsibilities in relation to PDP implementation for students?

E2   How are staff supported in dealing with personal and academic boundaries, in relation to PDP implementation for students (for example, students sharing personal information)?

E3   In what ways are academic staff involved in the review and evaluation of PDP? [See also Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement, page 20.]

Staff engagement

E4   How are staff engaged in a discussion about what PDP can help students achieve, for example, during staff development sessions? [See also Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement, page 20, and Aspect K: benefits for students, page 55.]

E5   What are the 'trigger points' for staff engagement? For example, is this a gradual process or does it occur after specific events?

E6   How is good practice in PDP pedagogy showcased within the institution? For example, in what ways are staff made aware of different models of PDP use within the institution, that they might think about adopting or modifying?

E7   How are staff able to evidence their own PDP activities to students, for example, by creating or even demonstrating their own plan as part of their CPD activities?

E8   How much is the terminology surrounding 'PDP' a barrier to potential engagement in your institution?

Institutional support

E9   Is the mechanism of delivery of the PDP and associated portfolios convenient for staff to use, and if 'barriers' exist, how are these addressed?

E10   Where appropriate, how are staff supported in relation to IT skills required for creating PDP portfolios?

E11   How are staff supported in acquiring knowledge, vocabulary and understanding associated with concepts related to PDP, for example, reflection? [See also Aspect I: support for reflection and action planning, page 47.]

E12   Who is responsible for promoting and supporting PDP engagement among staff?

E13   Should staff engagement in PDP potentially be recognised via reward and promotion schemes and staff workload models? If so, how?

Support at school/discipline and programme levels

E14   How are staff supported in creating materials that tailor PDP activities to suit the needs of their students and discipline, for example, by learning technologists, or staff experienced in assessing reflective practice or through the relevant PSB?

E15   How does the institutional PDP framework allow staff flexibility to tailor PDP activities to suit the needs of their students and discipline?

E16   How are staff supported in inducting students to PDP?

Commentary

To support learner engagement with PDP, staff need to be fully aware, informed and engaged with both the concept and process. Without this, students can be sent or can receive conflicting messages about the value and importance of PDP, resulting from misinformation or a lack of understanding disseminated by staff members.

Staff awareness and understanding

Effective information transfer within all complex organisations like HEIs poses a routine challenge on any topic. New staff, in particular, will need opportunities to learn about the PDP system that is in place at their institution, and its underpinning rationale. PDP as a concept may be completely new to them, or it may 'look and feel' very different from processes they have previously encountered. Opportunities for 'hands-on' experience of the process and to talk with students who are currently using PDP are key to raising awareness and understanding.

Programmes for teaching in HE provide a good way to introduce PDP to new staff. In addition, they give time to discuss the opportunities and challenges provided by this particular approach to supporting learning and planning. PDP can also be used as a tool within teaching in HE programmes. This can provide new (and more experienced) members of staff with an opportunity to experience PDP from the learner's point of view and to both engage with it and evaluate its potential from their perspective as students on the programme. Not only can this provide experience of and insight into PDP but it

also lends credibility to staff who then move on to engaging their own students with PDP. According to Jackson (2001a):

> PDP will help academic staff:
>
> ● by helping students to be more independent/autonomous learners
>
> ● improve the quality of experience for tutors and tutees when it is linked to personal tutoring systems
>
> ● make more effective use of off-campus opportunities for learning like work placements or study abroad
>
> ● by creating a mechanism through which career-related skills and capabilities can be recorded
>
> ● by improving their understanding of the development of individual students and their ability to provide more meaningful employment references on their behalf.

Staff can find out about, and keep up-to-date with, discussion and new developments in PDP via a range of networked national organisations. A good place for them to start is the HEA which provides a web portal for this area (HEA, 2009a). An excellent national overview of the picture in Scotland, with associated resources including a Scottish HE PDP mailing list, is available via the Scottish PDP Forum (HEA, 2009b). Regular desktop updates are also available from the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA), which produces the *PDP and e-Portfolio UK Newsletter* (CRA, 2009a).

The CRA website also includes a specific area for higher education where staff can access resources and also search for case studies within their discipline area. Connecting with staff through their subject speciality can be a very good way to engage their interest, particularly as discipline-related materials and resources ground PDP within the individual's area of practice, making it more directly relevant for them. The HEA Subject Centres provide a good way into this. For example, the Subject Centre for English provides a useful case study on integration of PDP in the first-year curriculum, including a student perspective on this process (HEA, 2009c).

Informing staff

Quinton and Smallbone (2008) suggested that:

> …successful implementation requires a blend of the following five areas of good practice: the effective and appropriate use of technology; internal staff champions; support for all staff involved in delivering PDP; clear and meaningful communication with students; and the capture of the institution's cumulative experience over time. Good practice within the conceptual aspects of PDP would include a clear vision of where responsibility lies for PDP within a university, a shared understanding of the purpose of PDP and the promotion of a PDP culture which engages both students and staff.

Staff at all levels need to be kept informed and up-to-date with regard to the PDP framework in place at their institution or teaching unit and particularly with regard to any changes or enhancements to the design or usability of the process.

Staff also need to know more than the 'nuts and bolts' of the PDP and to be aware of the underpinning rationale and values associated with PDP at their institution. Taking this a step further, colleagues also need to be involved in the ongoing discussions around those value sets and to feel that they can contribute to those discussions and thus to feel ownership of the process. Without this, it will be very difficult for them to communicate with conviction any sense of the PDP to their students. Workshops which focus on reflecting on the PDP process, delivered and available to all staff groups, can be a valuable way of keeping staff informed of changes and developments and also in supporting them in reflecting on what PDP could mean for them and their students within their particular discipline area. An example of such a general workshop is provided in the Appendix on page 70. This kind of development opportunity is particularly suited to the beginning or end of the academic year where there is scope for anticipation of the year ahead or reflection on the past year.

Staff engagement

Engagement is taken to mean a positive attitude and commitment to the PDP concept and process. Why should staff not engage with PDP? Colleagues may have a number of preconceptions about PDP, most of which arise from misinformation with regard to the process, and which may include:

- concerns that subject content will have to be sacrificed to allow students time to engage with the PDP process

- a feeling that PDP is an external imposition

- considering PDP to be someone else's responsibility (perhaps the Careers Service?)

- concerns that a focus on PDP challenges the 'traditional' view of HE

- confusion about the terminology and underlying ethos of the PDP framework.

In this connection, Strivens (2006a) reported that:

> Staff came up with four priorities for further development. A key concern was the development of a sound evidence base. They also wanted more high quality resources, more training in the skills necessary to support the process and more involvement from senior management. It also became clear that institutions were increasingly looking for technological support for all aspects of the PDP process.

It is recognised that staff engagement with the PDP process can be promoted via certain 'triggers', for example:

- having hands-on experience of working with PDP tools, such as creating their own PDP or using the self-evaluation 'instruments' provided with existing PDP material (for example, learning styles or personality questionnaires)

- discussing PDP with students or reading case studies regarding the student experience of engaging with the PDP process

- considering the benefits (and limitations) of reflection as a tool for learning

- learning about the ways in which PDP can be integrated within disciplinary programmes of study, perhaps by hearing about the approaches of others

- thinking about the ways in which PDP can be integrated within generic support such as advising systems

- learning about the views of invited PSB or employer representatives on PDP, possibly in relation to CPD frameworks

- recognition through reward and promotion schemes.

Ruth Lawton, Birmingham City University (personal communication) has outlined benefits from an approach that initially helps staff share their understandings of PDP as a concept and then identify PDP-related activities that are already encompassed within their curriculum. Another approach she advocates is encouraging staff to carry out PDP for their personal benefit, and having convinced them of its merits, linking this to support for developing the PDP framework for their students.

Helpful staff development events could include those that focus on information sharing; case studies of good practice; research evidence of impact on learning; and events which involve students so that staff can hear about the benefits 'straight from the horse's mouth'. Different strategies will need to be employed at different times for different groups of colleagues and some ideas for workshop sessions are provided in the Appendix on page 70.

Aspect F: engaging undergraduate students

Experience suggests that students are not readily convinced of the merits of PDP. The process appears to work well for students when they appreciate its relevance to them personally, consider this type of work as integral to their curriculum, understand the benefit of reflective practice, and realise the value of career planning from an early stage to enhance their employability. It is vital that students perceive that staff are committed to the ethos of PDP. Engagement of students may be promoted via the PDP model used by delivery mechanisms, and through institutional approaches to induction and embedding, including the use of well-constructed scenarios and the involvement or endorsement of graduate students and employers or professional associations.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Promotion/induction

F1   How and when are students provided with a clear vision of what PDP can help them achieve (for example, during PDP induction sessions, in discussion with a personal tutor or careers advisor)? [See also Aspect D: promotion and introduction, page 24.]

F2   How are more experienced students and alumni involved in explaining the merits of PDP as part of induction or PDP support (for example, during induction, as tutors, via exemplar portfolios and commentaries, or through the involvement of students' association officers or class representatives)?

F3   In what ways does PDP encompass career planning aspects (for example, during induction sessions)?

Support

F4   What forms of support are available to maintain student engagement or reduce barriers to engagement (for example, technical support, additional tutoring or constructive feedback)?

F5   Which staff members have responsibility for promoting and supporting PDP engagement among students and how do they discharge this duty?

F6   How are employers or professional associations used to make the links from PDP to continuing professional development (CPD)?

Embedding/assessment

F7　How is the workload expected of students for PDP integrated into module or programme workloads and is it proportionate?

F8　Are students adequately assessed and 'rewarded' via marks, credit or certification for their engagement in PDP and PDP-related activities? If so, how? [See also Aspect H: assessing PDP, page 42, and Aspect K: benefits for students, page 55.]

Evaluation

F9　What evidence is there that the mechanism of delivery of the PDP and associated portfolios is convenient for students to use, and that the language used is easily comprehended?

F10　What evidence is there that the student/PDP 'interface' is attractive, accessible and clearly written?

F11　What demonstrable outputs arise from PDP activities (for example, a CV for vacation work, hints for teamwork, making informed choices about degree pathways)?

F12　In what ways are students and their representatives involved in the review of PDP? [See also Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement, page 20.]

Commentary

An essential element in the effective deployment of PDP will be the extent to which students are prepared to engage with PDP from the outset. It is common to receive feedback from graduating students along the lines that they would have been keener to engage with PDP at an earlier stage if they 'knew then what they know now'. At early stages, many students adopt a strategic approach to their learning and experience suggests that their approach to PDP is no different. If students recognise from the outset that:

- PDP is of personal relevance to them

- engaging in PDP activity is an integral part of their learning experience (see also Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context, page 37)

- reflective practice is directly beneficial and that early career planning can be of value to them (see also Aspect K: benefits for students, page 55)

- they will be 'better prepared for the demands of continuing progression and career development in professional and academic careers' (QAA, 2008)

then they are more likely to willingly engage with PDP. Thus, QAA (2008) recognises that:

> Students do not participate in such processes for altruistic reasons: they have to perceive the investment they make will be valued.

Significant contributory elements towards this goal include:

- the respective extents to which academic staff have themselves engaged with the PDP process (see Aspect E: engaging academic staff, page 28). As Quinton and Smallbone (2008) commented: '...successful implementation requires...internal staff champions...and the promotion of a PDP culture which engages both students and staff'.

- whether the PDP mechanisms and processes appear to students to have relevance to their particular disciplinary context (see Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context, page 37)

- how PDP develops as students progress through their programme of studies (see Aspect J: progression and academic development, page 51).

A range of mechanisms can be deployed to facilitate and encourage student engagement and the blend of measures adopted will and should reflect the particular contextual approach for PDP which has been adopted for the particular cohort of undergraduates being targeted. Some measures, such as those which promote and induct, can be categorised as 'pushing' or encouraging students towards PDP use. Others, such as assessment reward, can be thought of as 'pulling' or attracting students towards engagement. A further strand of mechanisms provide guidance and support for students to consolidate their use of PDP.

Promotion and induction

Students can be encouraged or 'pushed' towards the use of PDP by the effective use of promotion and induction measures. If students are uncertain from the outset as to why PDP is being deployed and what it is meant to achieve from their perspective, then it is highly unlikely that they will engage effectively.

Issues to be considered as part of the promotion and induction processes are as follows:

- the induction process must be clearly planned and contextualised. For example, is PDP introduced as part of separate induction processes at each level of study and presented as an integral part of the level activities, or is PDP dealt with in isolation as a standalone induction process?

- how does the information delivered at induction fit with other information released over the academic year? Is the combined effect one of information overload or is there an imbalance or gap in information delivery? Are all materials of the same high quality?

- is the PDP framework well designed and have students been involved in the design process?

- have all issues of access and reliability been addressed before launch and induction?

- is there an ongoing and balanced use of announcements and reminders about the value of PDP use?

- are efforts continuously made by staff to promote the embedded or contextualised nature of PDP?

Attraction of PDP for students

One of the strongest drivers for effective uptake of PDP at an undergraduate level is its appeal to students. If students are attracted towards using PDP they are far more likely to continue to use it over their entire academic experience. Key drivers to be considered include:

- strategic focus - students are drawn to PDP if they recognise the role it

can play in areas such as enhancing employability, supporting the development of an effective CV and aiding in effective career planning. Edwards (2005) suggests that: 'In implementing and supporting students in PDP activities, HEI's [sic] should highlight and include activities to emphasise the longer term benefits in relation to "life-skills" for self-career management and maintenance of employability in the modern commercial world'.

- assessment - many students will engage in a different and potentially more focused manner if PDP is assessed (see Aspect H: assessing PDP, page 42).

- case studies and role models - worked examples or case studies can be used to provide direct evidence to students as to how effective PDP may be. Student role models, for example class representatives, can be used to personalise support for, and champion, case study examples.

- links to personal tutor and advising schemes - PDP can be linked to tutorial and advising schemes as another example to students of how PDP can be effectively used in a supportive context.

- references - some institutions have considered linking the use of PDP to the provision of meaningful employment references.

- extra-curricular activities - PDP can be exemplified as a means for students to effectively incorporate and blend a meaningful record of their co-curricular activities with their mainstream learning experiences.

Support

The most effectively promoted and potentially appealing PDP may still prove unattractive to students if it is poorly supported. There are many ways in which PDP can be supported in a manner which is reassuring to students:

- technical support - some students may have problems with the technology required to access an online PDP framework, but increasingly this is a minority difficulty. Issues of unreliability or difficulty of access may be of more concern. Clearly, if an online PDP system is unreliable then students are less likely to use it. If it is intended that PDP is to become a core student activity then technical support must recognise it as a core function.

- online support - many students will be happier, and will be more ready, to access online support rather than approach a member of staff.

- relevant personal support - if PDP-use has been linked to a personal tutor or advising scheme then it is important that tutors and advisers are seen as readily accessible first points of contact in relation to PDP. If others, such as careers advisers, are identified as playing a central role in the PDP then they should be equally accessible.

- targeted groups of students - students entering study at non-standard entry points or other groups, such as international or mature students, may have differing support needs which should be recognised from the outset.

Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context

Although PDP can work effectively outwith a curricular context for some students (for example, in a co-curricular or centrally-provided model), embedding PDP into mainstream academic activities in a subject discipline context has been suggested as one of the characteristics of effective PDP practice. This can increase staff and student engagement and result in a number of positive outcomes, including improved student learning. In many cases, models of implementation will vary within an institution, depending on discipline, but should be underpinned by an institutional policy which sets out a rationale and strategic framework for doing so.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Contextualisation/embedding in the curriculum

G1   What opportunities are there to include PDP activities in your curriculum?
Are these opportunities more beneficial at programme or module level?
Has a curriculum mapping exercise been carried out?

G2   To what extent does PDP and/or PDP-related skills, for example reflective skills, feature in the QAA subject benchmark statement for your subject (either implicitly or explicitly), and how do your intended learning outcomes reflect this?

G3   How can skills or attributes which are particularly relevant to your subject discipline be identified by a student through the PDP process?

G4   How can you ensure PDP activities associated with the curriculum are developmental in nature and therefore appropriate for students at different levels?

G5   How could HEA Subject Centre resources on PDP, where present, be used more effectively within your subject?

G6   How could the terminology surrounding 'PDP' be made more user-friendly in your institution/department?

G7   If you do not currently use the term 'PDP' in your department/school (for example, because reflection and planning activities are embedded), how are students aware that they are undertaking the process?

Generic versus subject-specific aspects of PDP

G8   How can you ensure that students in combined courses or in earlier years do not receive mixed messages about PDP in modules run by different teaching units within the institution?

G9   To what extent are any skills audits, templates or other means of capturing student self-audit activities orientated to your subject or discipline?

G10   To what extent could the language used to describe PDP-related activities be contextualised in your subject or discipline, or are there advantages in using generic language? If discipline-orientated, how is it introduced or accommodated in PDP resources available to students?

Professionalism/CPD links

G11   To what extent are students given opportunities within the curriculum to meet careers advisers or external contacts (for example, professional bodies' representatives, alumni, practitioners or potential employers), to link PDP practice to future career development?

G12   How could PDP link effectively to professional behaviours/ethics for your subject area, where applicable?

G13   How could PDP link effectively to the membership criteria and/or models of CPD required by the professional bodies associated with your subject or discipline?

G14   If you use the term 'professional development planning', rather than 'personal development planning', how is personal development incorporated in what you do?

Commentary

PDP can be linked with personal tutoring schemes, career planning activities or the mainstream curriculum (see Aspect B: model, design and branding, page 16). This commentary focuses on the integration or embedding of PDP into academic activities - viewed as potentially one of the most effective ways to maximise staff and student engagement (see Aspect E: engaging academic staff, page 28, and Aspect F: engaging undergraduate students, page 33). Atlay (2006) outlined six main points in favour of this approach:

1   it supports learning - by encompassing learning processes and skills

2   all students can benefit from PDP - by ensuring it is a 'normal' activity

3   it ensures a common and coherent student experience - through effective curriculum design

4   it is a more effective use of resources - for example, through staff working with a class rather than individuals

5   it prepares students for life beyond university - acting as a vehicle for introducing professionalism

6   it fosters belief - by sending a clear message that PDP is valued.

The latter point is regarded as vital - without embedding there is a risk that students will perceive PDP activities to be 'bolt-on' to their curriculum and hence of less potential relevance to them than their curricular activities. As the Individualised Support for Learning through E-portfolios (ISLE) Project (2009) reported:

> PDP proved to be most effective and valuable where it was embedded into programmes of study or into specific modules....The voluntary approach seems to equate to 'less important', and students have demonstrated that they will prioritise other 'more important' activities.

Effective embedding of PDP within the curriculum should result in discipline-appropriate learning outcomes that are inherently attractive to both staff and students.

Models for linking PDP to the curriculum

Atlay (2009) identified five distinct ways in which PDP could be associated with curricular activities and noted advantages and disadvantages to each:

1   Discrete (or 'bolt on') - where 'students may be provided with opportunities to engage in PDP, and encouraged to take them, but these are optional and additional to the curriculum and students are left…to decide whether they should engage'. Simplicity and low resourcing are the main advantages here, with lack of student engagement being the main risk.

2   Linked - 'PDP [is run] in parallel with the curriculum but linked to it, so that there is an explicit and supported relationship between the two'. The advantage is that the student experience is more controlled, with minimal disruption of the standard curriculum, but lack of student engagement remains a risk.

3   Embedded (appearing within specific modules within a programme) - 'These modules provide the main support for PDP and may serve to link with material studied in other modules…[and] may have a skills and/or a subject focus as well as emphasising PDP'. The main advantage is greater control over the student experience, but a risk is that this is fragmented.

4   Integrated (appearing in most if not all modules within a programme) - here, 'PDP is fully integrated throughout the curriculum. In such a model, reflective approaches underpin the delivery of the curriculum, and the students' Progress File or personal development record/e-portfolio becomes a record of their curriculum activities'. The advantage is that PDP becomes an integrated part of student and staff thinking, but there are difficulties in persuading all staff to carry this out, and a risk that PDP loses 'visibility'.

5   Extended (PDP is used to integrate activities both within and outwith the curriculum) - in this case, 'PDP consciously serves to provide the link between the academic curriculum and…wider experiences'. This approach draws together study, work and other experiences, but outcomes may be unpredictable.

Developing the integration of PDP within the curriculum

In many instances, activities, skills and processes which are appropriate for inclusion in PDP activities will already exist at programme or module level within a current curriculum. Atlay (2006) provides a tool for auditing and reviewing practice, focusing on academic, personal and employability strands. Activities which may be susceptible to 'translation' for PDP purposes can be highlighted by means of curriculum mapping. This will assist in identifying both immediate and potential opportunities for inclusion of PDP activities in an

existing curriculum and whether present practice and activities are focused at modular or programme levels. For example, it can reveal whether all PDP activities are focused in a few modules (that is, the Modular model) and whether opportunities for PDP activities can be identified in others (that is, moving towards an Embedded or Curriculum Plus model).

The initial mapping of areas which may be translated to PDP should then be considered in the context of any external requirements at a discipline level, such as professional accreditation requirements and QAA subject benchmark statements with a view to producing a blended approach to PDP activities which meets not only the pedagogic requirements at module or programme level, but reflects the needs and requirements of relevant external bodies and regimes. A holistic approach such as this is more likely to effectively meet the needs of students, staff and external bodies.

In turn, the learning outcomes at module and/or programme level should reflect the PDP activities and PDP-related skills which have been identified from the curriculum mapping and recognition of external requirements. It follows that they should be reflected in the manner and modes of assessment at module and/or programme level (see Aspect H: assessing PDP, page 42).

Such a mapping exercise will also reveal the extent to which PDP activities are developmental in nature and clearly identifiable as appropriate to the level of study a student has reached within a programme of study, as discussed in Aspect J: progression and academic development, page 51.

External influences and guidance

The process of embedding PDP in a subject discipline context provides an ideal opportunity to address the needs and requirements arising from external relationships and sources in a manner which may not only enhance the overall approach to PDP but also address the needs and requirements of discipline-linked third parties in a more effective way. Examples of such instances are as follows:

- PDP can be designed to incorporate student-centred reflection on engagement with QAA subject benchmark statements

- PDP can be designed to record achievement and evidence skills attainment and development which may be directly relevant to external or professional accreditation at a module and/or programme level

- inculcating the use of PDP can be directly linked to notions of professionalism within a disciplinary context and may be used as direct preparation for engagement with models of CPD used within particular disciplines and/or professions

- increasing numbers of employers use competence-based methods of assessing suitability for employment which require solid evidence of skills and competence attainment. PDP provides an ideal mechanism to record such competences and to develop the skills to create such a record.

Support for discipline-related activities is increasingly available from HEA Subject Centre websites. The UKCLE (UK Centre for Legal Education) project on 'Using e-portfolios in legal education' has produced a range of outputs, including a dedicated guide to the use of e-portfolios in law as a discipline (UKCLE, 2009). Accrediting bodies are also

increasingly active in this field, both in relation to requirements and expectations in qualifying modules and programmes and in respect of support and guidance to achieve accreditation requirements. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has a requirement that all candidates seeking the APC (Assessment of Professional Competence qualification) which leads to full professional qualification must maintain an up-to-date personal development plan which must be reviewed every six months (see Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement, page 20). In addition to this requirement, the RTPI provides electronic templates for PDPs, examples of good and bad practice, and guidance on how to make PDPs work (RTPI, 2009).

Aspect H: assessing PDP

Research indicates that students engage with PDP activities when these are embedded in their curriculum and assessed. This suggests a requirement for relevant learning outcomes, suitable learning activities and assessment using appropriate marking criteria (that is, constructive alignment, in the sense of Biggs, 1996). Assessment of PDP is a relatively new pedagogic activity and methods of assessing process and depth of reflection independent of personal content are required. It is not clear whether a set of generic PDP marking criteria will emerge, or whether context-specific marking criteria will always be required for truly embedded PDP activities.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Learning outcomes within the curriculum

H1   What is the institutional or college/faculty/department approach to embedding PDP activities (for example, are they embedded within the curriculum, presented within a core skills module, considered as part of a personal tutor scheme or are they covered within special workshop sessions)?

H2   How are intended learning outcomes used to encourage engagement with PDP? [See also Aspect D: promotion and introduction, page 24, and Aspect F: engaging undergraduate students, page 33.]

H3   How are students supported to connect their curriculum activities to their PDP?

H4   How are curricular activities with relevance to PDP flagged as such to students?

H5   Are elective/optional module choices accounted for in the PDP strategy, so that the possibilities of duplication or omission for an individual student's curriculum are minimised (for example, via a curriculum mapping exercise)?

Assessment information

H6   How are curricular PDP-related activities structured within the curriculum or programme, and are these routinely assessed?

H7   What proportion of marks is allocated to PDP activities, and is this appropriate to encourage and reward engagement?

H8   What are the opportunities for formative assessment and for receiving feedback from staff or peers on PDP activities?

H9   What PDP-related marking criteria are used by staff and how are these published for students?

Capturing non-curricular input

H10   How is the relevance of extra-curricular activities to PDP flagged to students? [See also Aspect K: benefits for students, page 55.]

H11 How is students' involvement in extra-curricular activities supported, recognised and recorded?

Commentary

Curriculum embedding and consequent assessment are acknowledged as potential influences on the successful adoption of PDP. Both encourage and reward student engagement, and, by motivating students, can help to overcome the initial resistance to such activities (see Atlay, 2005). For many students, taking account of assessment feedback is an important PDP process. For staff too, the process of contextualising PDP may help by indicating suitable vehicles for formative and summative assessment.

An embedded model for PDP activities implies that these are an integral part of the curriculum (see Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context, page 37). Adopting the principles of constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996), this suggests that:

- the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) should explicitly reference PDP-related activities (Moon, 2005). These would normally be communicated to students in a module handbook or similar

- the curriculum should include PDP-related activities. This might include formative opportunities to practise and develop related skills

- PDP-related activities should be assessed. This implies the creation of objective marking schemes that align with the ILOs.

Can we assess reflection?

A key issue in assessment of PDP is whether reflective content can be considered 'right' or 'wrong' in assessment terms, because it is essentially personal in nature and is 'owned' by the student creating it. Although some practitioners worry that the act of assessment may influence the reflective process adversely (see, for example, Atlay, 2005), established practice in assessment of portfolios and reflective writing indicates that it is possible to create an objective set of marking criteria that minimise subjectivity on the part of the assessor and avoid value judgements about content that is personal to the student (see Strivens, 2006b, and Kember et al, 2008). Indeed, Kember et al (2008) go further, stating:

> Where courses have as an aim the promotion of reflective practice, it will enhance the attainment of the goal if the level of reflective thinking is assessed.

Many PDP frameworks operate through a portfolio of templates - essentially tables containing a mix of staff and student-generated content, designed to structure, facilitate and organise elements of student reflection and planning. Any assessment scheme for elements of PDP portfolios will presumably operate by considering the student-generated template content, for example, reflective analysis of needs and opportunities, an action plan and, in many cases, a developing CV. Therefore, the goal and methodology of assessment may have an impact on the design of templates.

Learning objectives and intended learning outcomes for PDP activities

Table 4 lists a set of potentially assessable PDP elements with generalised learning objectives (GLOs) and intended learning outcomes (ILOs). These relate to a complete PDP portfolio; in many cases, only a subset will be assessed in any one module. ILOs would also need to be contextualised in individual cases and specific links to areas of professionalism related to the relevant discipline and its curriculum would be of obvious value. The QAA subject benchmark statements are a potential source of such objectives. The 'core module' approach to PDP may encourage focus but reduce linkage to the curriculum, whereas the reverse may be the case for a fully embedded approach.

Complications may occur in modular curricula where reference to PDP and assessment is made within different modules. Ideally, issues of repetition, omission and coordination would be considered as a part of the relevant degree programme review process under quality assurance procedures. Best practice would presumably involve publication of a mapping table, possibly within the student handbook(s), indicating when different aspects of PDP were treated within the curriculum, and this is indeed an expectation for certain accrediting bodies.

Assessed element	Generalised learning objectives	Intended learning outcomes
1 Completion of templates	To use the PDP resources, tutor guidance and events and materials presented via the curriculum in the process of completing a portfolio (or elements thereof) 'within the spirit' of PDP	A 'complete' PDP portfolio, consisting of all the elements expected, including: [list], incorporating a suitable extent and quality of content
2 Completion of key end products		Specific templates or other outcomes, such as skills audits, development or action plans and a CV, completed satisfactorily according to specific marking criteria
3 Presentation and organisation of template content	To present the content of the PDP in language and writing style appropriate to context	Well-written elements of PDP that employ a suitable vocabulary and writing style matching expectations for each component, and meeting relevant criteria for quality of presentation
4 Evidence of self-appraisal	To use the available tools and 'instruments' to evaluate personal qualities and skills, and to use the information obtained within the PDP	Evidence that indicates that outcomes of self-appraisal have been recorded and that they have been incorporated appropriately into a development plan
5 Evidence of scoping of opportunities for development	To investigate opportunities for personal development and to incorporate these within the PDP	Recorded evidence of scoping of opportunities, such as: visiting careers service, volunteering websites, and so on

6 Effective prioritisation within action plans	To demonstrate the ability to prioritise elements of a personal action plan	Evidence that the importance and urgency of different elements of the plan have been evaluated and that this has been used in prioritising short, medium and long-term goals
7 Language and depth of reflection	To reflect appropriately on past and present status and development needs and to record such reflections within the PDP using appropriate vocabulary	Recorded reflection that meets expectations in relation to: • reality/realism • openness/frankness • writing style/vocabulary • aspects covered • evidence
8 Quantity and quality of evidence supporting self-appraisal and reflection	To make reference to evidence that supports the 'claims' made within the PDP regarding, for example, level of skills	That the PDP contains the expected number of attachments or links; that each attachment or link is relevant to context; and that the quality of attachments or links meets expectations and matched any claims made in the PDP
9 Evidence of continuing personal development	To demonstrate through past and present personal development plans, a commitment to ongoing improvement/enhancement of skills, achievements, curricular and extra-curricular engagement	Demonstrable personal development evidenced through past and present plans. An indication of which areas have seen most progressive change over a relevant period

Table 4: generalised learning objectives and intended learning outcomes for some assessable elements of PDP.

Marking criteria and marking schemes

As Strivens (2006b) commented: 'The first step in designing a portfolio for efficient assessment is to decide exactly what is being assessed'. Essential for fair and affordable PDP assessment are explicit and well communicated marking criteria and marking schemes (Atlay, 2005; Moon, 2005). Typical marking criteria and schemes might address factors such as:

• completion of templates 'within the spirit' of PDP

• completion of key 'end products', such as skills audits, plans and a CV

• presentation and organisation of template content, including writing style

- evidence that detailed self-appraisal has occurred

- evidence of scoping of opportunities for development

- effective prioritisation within action plans

- language and 'depth' of reflection, as opposed to its direction

- quantity and quality of any evidence supporting self-appraisal and reflection

- evidence of continuing personal development

- evidence of accreditation or reflection on extra-curricular activities.

In certain disciplines, for example those that are professional/vocational, it might be appropriate to assess the competency level of skills, but in general, it is rather the **process** of development that is being assessed, rather than the specific level attained.

Because assessed PDP elements generally represent a minor component of overall assessment (typically, no more than 10 per cent of the marks available for any module), marking criteria can be relatively 'blunt', in the sense that it would not be necessary to develop detailed criteria covering an extensive scale. For example, for any specific element, the scale could be binary (intended/expected outcome present, or not present) or considered within a four-category scheme such as that of Kember et al (2008):

1   habitual action/non-reflection - no significant reflective thought is evident

2   understanding - an attempt is made to reach an understanding but this is
not reflective

3   reflection - an attempt to relate an understanding of concepts to personal experience

4   critical reflection - evidence of a transformation of perspective as a result of reflection.

The student and staff workload involved in producing, submitting and assessing output should be commensurate with its status within the assessment profile for any given module. Marking schemes related to the criteria should be easy to operate for large class sizes and might usefully be completed online. Efficient assessment of portfolios was considered by Strivens (2006b), who outlined a number of strategies for addressing this issue. Peer assessment is an option that could be considered, for example.

The recognition of extra-curricular activities

There is potential for extra-curricular activities to be recognised within PDP framework(s). Some HEIs are developing credit schemes for such activities and the report of the Burgess Steering Committee (Universities UK, 2007) noted that while the proposed Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) was intended primarily as an academic document, it had the potential to be used by institutions for formal recognition of a wider range of student achievement, including: 'measuring and recording the skills and achievements that students acquire through extra-curricular activities'. The challenges of such an approach have been outlined by Ward (2007).

Aspect I: support for reflection and action planning

It is widely recognised that it is difficult to promote deep reflection and introspection on the part of students, especially at early levels of study. There is in particular a need to explain and exemplify the concept of reflection, and to provide feedback on what might constitute valuable reflection. When reflection as part of PDP is assessed, students need to be informed that it is not the personal reflective or introspective content that is being assessed, but the depth of reflection that this reveals. There is also a need to help students to differentiate conceptually between the reflective or introspective task from the mechanism of recording the outcomes of these processes. In addition, students need to be supported in creating realistic and prioritised action plans that are developmental in nature.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Induction and support

I1   How is the nature and value of PDP-related reflection explained to students?

I2   How is feedback given on students' ability to reflect (for example, online, face-to-face)?

I3   How are students given feedback on the content of their reflection?

I4   How are students helped to take reflection forward to create an action plan?

I5   How are students provided with guidance on prioritising and delivering an action plan?

I6   How are completed action points recorded in a CV as part of the PDP process?

I7   How is reflection and introspection supported through the design of the PDP and its templates, for example, through the use of reflective learner questions (as per the Effective Learning Framework)?

I8   How are students shown models of good reflective and planning practice (for example, via exemplar PDP portfolios)?

I9   How are the potential benefits of reflection and action planning demonstrated tangibly to students?

I10   In relation to concepts of personalisation, how well does the PDP framework and delivery mechanism cope with different styles of learning and expression?

Embedding and assessment

I11   How is the ability to reflect assessed summatively?

I12   How are formative reflective exercises included in the syllabus?

I13   How does the PDP framework support the review of completed and uncompleted action points?

Commentary

Can students become effective in PDP through osmosis or do the skills and understandings required to engage successfully need to be taught? From case studies, anecdotal evidence and increasingly from research, it seems that there is a strong case for supporting students in developing the skills of reflection and action planning, both of which are integral to engaging in and benefitting from PDP. This is particularly important because these activities do not necessarily come naturally to all students.

'What gets us from experience to understanding is reflection' (Hinett, 2002a; 2002b) and in the context of PDP, taking action or having a plan for action needs to be an outcome from that reflection. In other words, 'The reflective and planning skills on which the idea of PDP is based are integral to knowing how to learn in different contexts and to transfer that learning' (QAA, 2008).

Reflection

There is extensive literature on the subject of reflective practice for professionals and on the purpose and use of reflection in higher education - see, for example, the review in the HEA Engineering Subject Centre (HEA, 2009e). It seems that it is a process that some find more natural than others. According to Moon (2001):

> …not all students find reflection easy when it is introduced as a specific requirement. Some will simply 'take to it', understanding its role in their learning and managing the process well. Some, however, who may be good students otherwise, will not understand what is meant by it - and will ask 'what is it that you want me to do?' It is important to recognise that some staff will not understand reflection either.

Quinton and Smallbone (2008) ask the question: 'If some students are not able rather than not willing to engage in the reflection needed to undertake PDP, what value will it hold for them?'. Clegg (2004) further explores the concept of reflection and argues for greater critical engagement with the conditions of reflection and an understanding of its limitations. Dealing with this aspect of PDP is therefore not without some difficulties, but this underpins the necessity for supporting reflection and embedding this support, so that all might benefit as far as possible. Miller et al (2008) recommended an 'academic literacies' approach to embedding reflective writing to support PDP at first-year level. Modelling by staff of reflective attitudes and approaches will also be of benefit. The HEA Engineering Subject Centre (HEA, 2009e) has some practical advice:

Students can only start reflecting if their lecturers provide them with:

● Clear guidance, in terms they can understand, as to what they should be achieving. This includes explicit intended learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and detailed guidance as to the process

● Detailed feedback on their work, again in terms that they can understand, that sets out the differences between what they have done and what they should have done. A great deal of thought needs to be given to how this can be accomplished efficiently and in a way that students will take notice of. Guided self-assessment or peer-assessment can be the answer here

● Guidance as to how they might repeat the learning activities more successfully. Remember, they might know that what they have done is not satisfactory, but be completely ignorant of ways in which they might do things differently

● The opportunity to repeat activities so that they can see the effects of trying new approaches.

Moon (2001, 2005) outlines some further useful reflective activities and approaches for staff to aid engagement with this aspect of PDP.

All this is in a context where there may be discipline-culture issues to consider, as some subjects lend themselves more to reflection and/or require 'deeper' reflection than others. Reflection can be structured or unstructured, depending on the context (Cottrell, 2003; Palgrave, 2009), while Moon (2001) goes on to differentiate between 'academic reflection' and 'common sense reflection', suggesting that it is worth considering, in advance, the depth of reflection that might be required for the intended learning outcome. Not all subjects require the depth of reflection that may be required by students on professional degrees (for example, education, social work or health-related disciplines), where the reflection may result in changes to an individual's behaviour at a professional level. The HEA Subject Centres (for example Law, Economics or Engineering) have useful content on reflection in the context of PDP.

In answer to the question 'How do I recognise reflective learning?' some examples of student skills, capability and attitudes relating to this process were provided by Jackson (2001a):

● able to relate teaching to their own learning;

● able to recognise, value, evidence and communicate their own learning in academic and non-academic contexts;

● able to share evidence of learning, reflect on feedback and provide feedback to others to help them learn;

● able to gather and record information on learning experiences and achievement;

● able to evaluate and recognise own strengths and weaknesses and identify ways in which perceived weaknesses might be addressed and strengths used to best advantage;

● able to learn from things that did not go according to plan;

- able to gain a deeper understanding through the process of analysis and evaluation;

- able to select from personal records and evidence of learning to demonstrate to others appropriate knowledge and abilities.

Aspect H: assessing PDP, page 42, covers issues concerned with assessing reflection.

Action planning

A focus on goal-setting and creating action plans should be at the heart of any PDP framework. According to Jackson (2001a), the core questions that underpin reflective learning and planning for self-improvement are:

- what have I learnt or done? **retrospective reflection**

- what do I need to learn or do to improve myself? **reflection on current situation**

- how do I do it? **review of opportunities and identification of personal goals or objectives**

- how will I know I've done it? **strategy for setting targets and reviewing progress.**

An additional reason for focusing attention on these aspects of PDP is that they are of particular interest to graduate employers. Planning/organisational skills, for example, were in the top 10 highly rated skills by graduate employers (Archer and Davison, 2008).

As with reflection, however, some students are more natural 'action planners' than others and will have learning styles that are congruent with the intellectual processes underlying PDP. For those who find the process more difficult, and to encourage engagement by all with this important aspect of PDP, supporting action planning through well designed PDP resources and focusing staff attention on this aspect will be helpful. For example, the Keynote Project (2002) provided exemplars of what SMART (see entry in Glossary, page 78) goals might look like in the context of PDP.

Some examples of skills, capability and attitudes relating to planning for improvement/development were provided by Jackson (2001a):

- demonstrate a responsible attitude to their own personal, educational and career development;

- able to identify what needs to be done to improve something;

- able to set realistic goals based on self-awareness and knowledge of the demands of the achievement context;

- able to recognise opportunities for new learning inside and outside the HE curriculum;

- able to create and apply a strategy for self-improvement;

- able to monitor and review progress towards the achievement of goals and targets;

- able to change the strategy if it isn't working;

- able to justify and account for their personal strategies.

Aspect J: progression and academic development

As a student progresses through levels of study, the level of PDP-related activity should match the sorts of learning outcome expected at each level (that is, following the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) descriptors). Anecdotal evidence suggests that attention should be paid to development in the middle stages of a degree, as induction and final-year outcomes are generally well-defined. The needs of late entrant, early exit and discontinuing students should also be taken into account.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Progression planning and integration (on the part of staff)

J1   How do you build in a progressive development in the types of PDP activities offered to students as they proceed through their studies?

J2   How are the needs of first-year, middle-year and final-year students differentiated?

J3   How and when is the process of development in PDP activities explained to students?

J4   How are the needs of late entrants, early exit and discontinuing students taken into account?

J5   In what ways are the final outcomes of PDP tailored for graduates within each discipline (for example, by cross-referencing to accrediting body benchmarks, via a well-refined CV, or by preparedness to engage in 'appropriate' CPD activities)?

J6   How are the outcomes of the PDP framework connected to academic support, advisory systems and the careers service?

Assisting the developmental process (information for students)

J7   How are students encouraged to take medium and longer-term views of their personal development as well as constructing shorter-term action points?

J8   How are students made aware of the cyclical, developmental nature of PDP? [See also Aspect D: promotion and introduction, page 24.]

J9   What encouragement is given to students to compare earlier versions of their PDP activities with current ones, to gain an appreciation of their personal development?

J10   How are links made between the achievement of learning outcomes and PDP activities?

J11   How are students asked to connect action planning points from earlier engagement with PDP to later points in the developmental sequence?

Commentary

Notions of progression and academic development are embedded in the SCQF, which describes itself as providing a method for learners to 'develop progression pathways' (SCQF, 2009), and are a key structural feature of QAA subject benchmark statements (see Jackson, 2001b, for a fuller discussion of the linkages between benchmarks and PDP). These fundamental requirements are recognised by staff and students alike and epitomise the concept of embedding in a curriculum context. Perhaps surprisingly, therefore, it is not always clear that PDP activities, when introduced at either modular or programme levels, have been developed in a manner which also takes account of progression and developmental issues.

The absence of clear progression linkages and clear evidence to students that development is taking place are more likely to suggest to students that PDP activities are, to them, less strategically relevant 'bolt on' activities. Conversely, students who can recognise clear evidence of personal development through the use of PDP are far more likely to engage with PDP activities (see also Aspect F: engaging undergraduate students, page 33). In short, where is the 'development' in PDP without some explicit element of progression?

Progression

An example of a sequenced or planned approach to PDP across four levels of study is shown in table 5.

Level 1	Reflect on transition to university, acquisition of basic academic skills and competences and level 1 performance.
Level 2	Compare level 1 performance to institutional/QAA subject benchmark statements, assess development needs and prepare an action plan for those needs. Outline career planning assessment.
Level 3	Review of level 2 action plan, updated development needs plan and detailed career planning.
Level 4	Reflection on earlier levels and collation of information for employment applications.

Table 5: example of a basic mapping of PDP activities to levels of study within a four-level programme.

Note: this example assumes a Scottish HE four-year degree pathway and might need to be modified for other systems.

This model reflects an approach to PDP which is more focused at a programme as opposed to a module level of intervention, but it demonstrates an approach which results in a clearly identifiable developmental path which can be achieved in a broad variety of ways at both programme and modular levels. This example illustrates how

progression can be built into PDP activities across levels but also highlights a number of progression related issues which are noteworthy:

- at each level, the induction/training mechanisms used to introduce and explain PDP activities should not only explain the particular activities to be deployed within the level, but explain the relevant interaction with earlier and later levels (as appropriate; see also Aspect D: promotion and introduction, page 24)

- entry and exit-level PDP activities are often the easiest to define and map. Level 1 can, for example, be clearly linked to transition issues relating to the commencement of university studies, while exit-level activities may be focused on career-related, lifelong learning and CPD preparedness issues. Clearly defining progression and development issues at levels 2 and 3 is an essential element of retaining students as engaged participants at these levels

- levels 2 and 3 are also crucial levels for late entrant and early exit students and the design of PDP activities for these levels must accommodate those entrants

- wherever the point of entry may be for students, there must be an appropriate element of training in how to reflect. Evidence suggests that students will engage without difficulty with the technical IT aspects of an online PDP system, but they may have no explicit background, or recognisable experience, in the process of reflection (see Aspect I: support for reflection and action planning, page 47).

The PDP cycle and evidence of development

From a student perspective, clear evidence of development as shown through PDP-use and outcomes is one of the strongest incentives for student engagement with PDP on an ongoing basis. As described in the *Guidelines for HE Progress Files* (QAA, 2001), in an example of effective PDP practice, students will have clear evidence of:

- their own learning experiences and achievement

- their progress towards the achievement of goals they have set.

The inherently cyclical nature of a well designed PDP process (figure 2a) should allow students to see development taking place. The first phase of the PDP cycle involves a scoping exercise which defines the parameters of the activity to be undertaken. This may, for example, take the form of a pre-prepared template which sets out the activities a student must undertake. Phase 2 requires the development of a prioritised plan to achieve the scoped activities, and the final phase is a review of the effectiveness of the scoped activities undertaken.

2a

Review   Scoping

Planning
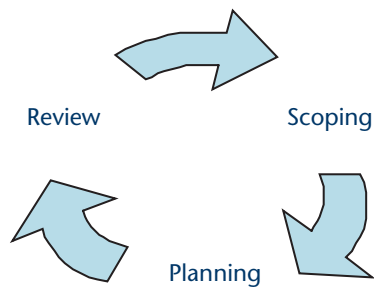
2b

Figure 2a: a simplified three-phase diagram of the PDP cycle.

Figure 2b: the My PDP logo from the University of Dundee PDP framework, an example of PDP 'branding' that embeds implicit cyclical activity.

If a student pursues a PDP activity which follows this cyclical process then the chain of activity should demonstrate to the student whether personal development is taking place. The PDP cycle can be effectively embedded and at the same time promoted through directed branding (see Aspect D: promotion and introduction, page 24, and Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context, page 37). The My PDP logo developed at the University of Dundee (figure 2b) provides a branded approach to the use of PDP which is readily recognisable and which also incorporates a very clearly communicated indication of the cycle of activities which is inherently part of the PDP process.

Aspect K: benefits for students

Student motivation is likely to be increased if they see tangible and personalised outcomes from the PDP process, such as a set of individually tailored and prioritised action plans for learning and other activities and a well-developed CV. Gaining academic credit, through engaging in PDP, is seen as a positive outcome by most. Less tangible, but important, outcomes from engagement with PDP include a better understanding of personal goals, aspirations and motivations, and a familiarity with vocabulary and language conventions related to reflection and employability. Increased understanding of the value of the PDP process and its outcomes (that is 'metacognition'), if made explicit, is also valuable, and can support future career management.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

'Tangible' outcomes

K1   How do students self-audit their generic and discipline-specific skills and use the outcomes of this process within their PDP?

K2   How and when are students given feedback on their PDP that can help them produce useful outcomes?

'Metacognitive' outcomes and awareness

K3   How are students made aware of the potential benefits of PDP?

K4   In what ways are your institution, faculty, college, school or department explicit about the outcomes that a student might achieve through PDP?

K5   How do students define personalised outcomes of PDP?

K6   How are PDP outcomes integrated with support schemes such as personal tutoring or careers advising? [See also Aspect I: support for reflection and action planning, page 47, and Aspect H: assessing PDP, page 42.]

K7   How are students provided with a guide to the metacognitive and linguistic skills (for example, learning how to learn) they are (or could be) developing as part of PDP?

K8   How could PDP in your institution, faculty, college, school or department develop understanding of concepts and vocabulary in relation to:

- Learning styles?
- Academic literacy and deeper learning?
- Teamwork roles?
- Levels of learning and thinking (in the sense of Bloom et al 1956)?

- Personal qualities and attributes?
- Skills?
- Graduateness and employability?

Maximising advantage by integration with learning experiences

K9   How could PDP be made appropriate and relevant for students at different levels in their degree programme? [See also Aspect J: progression and academic development, page 51.]

K10   To facilitate integration, how are staff supported in acquiring knowledge, vocabulary and understanding associated with PDP-related concepts and process? [See also Aspect I: support for reflection and action planning, page 47.]

K11   How could the acquisition of deeper understanding of PDP-related concepts (for example, self-awareness, an ability to reflect and action plan) and relevant vocabulary be integrated within the student's PDP?

K12   How are students made aware of the potential for extracurricular activities to contribute to their PDP? [See also Aspect D: promotion and introduction, page 24]

K13   How are students made aware of the cyclical, developmental nature of PDP? [See also Aspect D: promotion and introduction, page 24, and Aspect J: progression and academic development, page 51.]

Commentary

According to QAA's *Personal development planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice* (QAA 2009):

> PDP results in an enhanced self awareness of strengths and weaknesses and directions for change. The process helps learners understand the value added through learning that is above and beyond attainment in the subjects they have studied…

This can be considered to be the ultimate goal: in reality, outcomes are likely to range from quite narrow (for example, for a specific purpose, such as an effective CV) to much broader (for example, where genuine personal development or learning occurs). The theoretical benefits of PDP can be summarised as follows (QAA, 2009):

> PDP helps learners:
>
> - plan, integrate and take responsibility for their personal, career and academic development, identifying learning opportunities within their own academic programmes and extra-curricular activities
>
> - recognise, value and evidence their learning and development both inside and outside the curriculum
>
> - be more aware of how they are learning and what different teaching and learning strategies are trying to achieve
>
> - be more effective in monitoring and reviewing their own progress and using their own records and evidence of learning to demonstrate to others what they know and can do

- evaluate and recognise their own strengths and weaknesses and identify ways in which perceived weaknesses might be improved and strengths enhanced

- develop their identity in relation to their academic, professional and personal progression

- develop a vocabulary to communicate their development and achievement

- be better prepared for seeking, continuing or changing employment or self-employment and be more able to articulate the skills and knowledge they have gained to others

- be better prepared for the demands of continuing progression and career development in professional and academic careers.

This is echoed by the approach of the National Union of Students to PDP (Streeting, 2007): '…we believe it to be a "good thing"; we think it is beneficial to those who have made the most of it...'

The issue that taxes many staff is how to convince students (and sometimes their own colleagues) that there is benefit in them undertaking what is sometimes seen as additional work in the context of other curriculum and outside commitments. To maximise the possibility that students will ultimately gain from participating in PDP, it is vital that they can appreciate readily the 'tangible' benefits from this engagement. If these outcomes are personalised and meaningful for the individual, then it is even more likely that engaging in the PDP process will be beneficial. Among the many models of PDP implementation, three ways of helping students realise the benefits of engaging in the PDP process stand out and are described further:

- linking PDP to employability

- embedding the process in an accredited module or programme

- linking PDP to a personal tutor system.

Benefits from linking PDP to employability

Through the use of tools such as personal transferable skills audits, commonly used in PDP frameworks associated with employability, students can make links between their curricular and extra-curricular activities and what employers value. These activities are particularly beneficial in the context of work-based learning, work placements, internships or fieldwork. Students commonly report in focus groups and questionnaires that the development of CVs (process and product) is something they find of particular benefit. Using evidence accumulated in either an e-portfolio or paper-based portfolio, an enhanced CV can be a practical way of articulating the skills and knowledge they have gained to the requirements of employers. As well as skills and knowledge, employers also value students who recognise that they have developed personal attributes such as 'metacognition, encompassing self-awareness regarding the student's learning, and the capacity to reflect on, in and for action' (Yorke and Knight, 2004); an outcome of engaging in PDP. (See also Aspect L: employability and employment, page 60.)

Benefits from linking PDP to assessment and accreditation

Accrediting aspects of PDP, and thereby maximising participation in the process, can benefit students by helping them 'be more aware of how they are learning and what different teaching and learning strategies are trying to achieve' (QAA, 2009). As Jackson (2001a) notes:

> The key lesson from practitioners who have used PDP to promote learning is that the process should be integral to learning. Students do not participate in such processes for altruistic reasons: they have to perceive the investment they make will be valued.

However, students can also take a strategic approach, and if the reward from investment of effort is less than 5-10 per cent of the total mark, for example, they may only pay lip service or not engage at all, thus accruing little or no benefit.

Benefits from undertaking PDP in vocational subjects, particularly in those accredited by PSBs, can mean that students can see themselves as 'better prepared for the demands of continuing progression and career development in professional and academic careers' (QAA, 2008). As the approach to PDP can be highly prescriptive, however, the wider benefits of PDP for personal development may be less clear.

In their paper *A Systematic Map and Synthesis Review of the Effectiveness of PDP for Improving Student Learning*, Gough et al (2003) confirmed that engaging with PDP through the curriculum benefits students, although there is a still a perception that this view is not supported by robust research according to the LearnHigher Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (2008). This crucial question is being addressed in the long term by a number of action research projects, as part of the National Action Research Network on Researching and Evaluating Personal Development Planning and e-Portfolio, available from the CRA website (CRA, 2009d).

Further discussion of these matters is provided in Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context, page 37, and Aspect H: assessing PDP, page 42.

Benefits from linking PDP to a personal tutor system

Although 'personalisation', as discussed in the QAA Scotland First Year Enhancement Theme (Knox and Wyper, 2008), is not just about one-to-one interaction with personal tutors, models of PDP which are centred on this means of delivery undoubtedly bring the benefits of personalisation to students. Having this focus in earlier years is seen as being particularly beneficial and may be one of the reasons behind the association between PDP and improving student retention. In this context, Knox and Wyper (2008) summarised the benefits to the student of PDP as follows:

> Through PDP students can personalise and take responsibility for their learning. Fundamentally, PDP is a process, not a product, so it can be used to support the personalisation of learning through facilitating the selection of pathways through learning that suit the individual learner. Whatever system we use, the more personalisation is allowed the more students will take ownership of their PDP and the more they'll make it their personal development portfolio, not a personal development portfolio.

Individual responsibility for PDP

Personal development planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice (QAA, 2009) states clearly: 'The ultimate responsibility for deriving benefit from PDP rests with each learner'. Although the onus is on the individual student to derive benefit, QAA Scotland, through its enhancement agenda, will be promoting examples of PDP policy and practice which maximise the opportunities for individuals to do so.

Aspect L: employability and employment

The notions of PDP and employability are closely aligned. Both aim to produce graduates with the skills, understandings and personable attributes, valued by both academics and employers. PDP can be used to facilitate student understanding of graduate attributes and skills and notions of graduateness, employability and professionalism. This may include such activities as: auditing personal transferable skills; making informed module or programme choices (where possible); learning the language used in self-description when applying for jobs; understanding and refining applications and CVs; scoping internships and placements and understanding their relevance to employers; investigating wider opportunities for enterprise and self-employment; and preparing for meetings with careers service staff and potential employers. PDP can be a structured means of planning, recording and reflecting on incremental development, with the 'employability' agenda contributing a context and a focus in terms of employment, as well as enhancing generic, transferable skills for lifelong learning.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Employability within the curriculum

L1   In what ways do the institution's relevant strategies integrate PDP and employability activities? For example, if the institution has an employability strategy or similar, how does this make reference to PDP, and how does the PDP strategy, where present, refer to employability?

L2   How far are the employability aspects of PDP an integral part of effective teaching?

L3   How does PDP assist in the assimilation of the 'language of employment and employability' and vice versa? [See also Aspect K: benefits for students, page 55.]

L4   How could employability skills and attributes be more clearly articulated and embedded in the PDP process?

Graduate attributes and skills

L5   In what ways does PDP promote the audit of personal transferable skills or graduate attributes? [See also Aspect K: benefits for students, page 55.]

L6   How could PDP help to promote students' 'graduateness' or acquisition and development of graduate attributes (for example, critical thinking skills, reflection on learning styles, ethical behaviour, ability to be an independent, lifelong learner)?

CV development and career planning

L7   How could PDP promote early consideration of career planning and potential career paths, and in what ways?

L8   How could the learning resources associated with PDP provide links to internal and external resources related to career planning?

L9   How could PDP encourage the development of tailored CVs to specific job or course vacancies from more general CVs?

L10   How could any employment or work experience-related activities and resources, linked to PDP, better assist students in their job-seeking strategies?

L11   To what extent are PDP processes and/or outcomes tailored for those leaving the institution with a certificate or a diploma?

Commentary

In considering the role of PDP in relation to employability and employment, it is important to appreciate that: 'employability implies something about the capacity of the graduate to function in a job, and is not to be confused with the acquisition of a job, whether a "graduate job" or otherwise' (Yorke, 2006). However, because developing an effective CV can be a tangible student benefit from some PDP models and is directly concerned with job acquisition, it is helpful to consider PDP in relation to both terms. For a range of perspectives on employability, on evidence linking employability and effective student learning, and the role of higher education in graduate employment, reference should be made to the Employability and Enterprise section of the HEA website.

Aligning PDP to employability and 'graduateness'

Employability (as opposed to employment) has been emphasised as a process rather than a state, according to Rob Ward's introductory section of the key reference publication *Personal Development Planning and Employability* (HEA, 2007). A commonly used definition of employability in higher education is: 'a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation(s) to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy' (Yorke, 2006).

As a process, it is supported by PDP which can help learners reflect on, articulate and evidence knowledge, skills and experiences gained from higher education. PDP can be the framework or structure through which students can recognise and articulate these. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (2004) endorses this description and notes that this definition of employability is concerned with the individual student's personal development, rather than external factors such as the labour market:

> Employability is not the same as employment. Helping learners to enhance their employability is not only about helping them to develop the knowledge and understandings needed for specific jobs, or helping them to write effective CVs. What people need, if they are to pursue their chosen occupations more effectively, also involves developing their ability to learn and to apply what they have learnt to positive effect in new and unfamiliar contexts. The skills and attributes which can help to enhance a person's employability (for example, communication, team working and critical thinking) are entirely consistent with the outcomes of what we might call 'good learning'.

Working definitions of 'graduateness' come from the HEA and Subject Centre 'Student Employability Profiles' produced in collaboration with the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) (HEA, 2009f). Each profile identifies skills that can be developed through the study of a particular discipline, based on subject benchmark statements. These skills have been mapped against input from CIHE Employer membership regarding the employability skills, competencies and attributes that they value in recruitment. The student version of these includes reflective questions which can be used to underpin PDP.

The link between PDP and employability will be further strengthened by the SFC's allocation of four year (2007-11) strategic funding to higher education to develop graduate employability. This work is being coordinated though the Scottish Higher Education Employability Network (SHEEN) and PDP is a specific area of focus in a number of institutions (HEA, 2009d).

Personal or professional development planning?

A number of institutions and/or specific subject disciplines have chosen to use 'professional' instead of, or together with, 'personal' in the title PDP. This reflects a specific approach in vocational degrees in particular, which may stem from the involvement of a PSB or be a way of engaging students by using recognisable terminology. This is the case in Heriot-Watt University, for example. In the context of postgraduate research students, the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA, sets out the expectation that learners will take 'responsibility for their own personal and professional development'.

The employment context

In general, employers welcome students who have engaged with PDP. In this context, Edwards (2005) commented that:

> Most employers put strongest emphasis on the process of PDP rather than the documented outcomes. In other words, the process is key because it adds value - by helping students reflect on their experiences and improve their ability to articulate and demonstrate resulting competencies during recruitment activities. If the process is continuous rather than fragmented or piecemeal it is felt to be of even higher value.

Institutions and programmes can and will decide for themselves when and if it is appropriate to introduce links to employers in their PDP approach. As seen elsewhere (for example, Aspect K: benefits for students, page 55), this link can be a driver for student engagement.

Edwards (2005) further explains how PDP can help students prepare for and understand the employment competencies they will meet in employer applications and interviews, and Kumar (2007) gives useful suggestions and materials for staff to assist students in improving their ability to relate their learning and achievements to employers' interests and needs and, ultimately, gain employment. Kumar's SOAR (Self - Opportunity - Aspirations - Results) approach opens up possibilities for PDP to be contextualised within disciplines, and personalised by individuals, as an overarching model for the delivery of benefits to students in the broad and generic sense.

Aspect M: linking PDP and continual professional development

Institutions should provide graduating students with either a copy of their PDP record or allow ongoing access to that record, and alert them to the issues involved in transferring a PDP to a continuing professional development (CPD) scheme. The portability of PDP content is an important issue. The goal of seamless transfer of information depends on the development and widespread adoption of common standards for information capture and dissemination. Institutions should also ensure that information is recorded in a form that complies with the relevant government legislation.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

Ownership and continuing access to PDP materials

M1   Are students provided with a permanent record/download of their PDP? If so, how?

M2   How do the students' PDPs link to their transcript and other portfolio materials?

M3   Are students allowed to access and continue developing their PDP for a period after graduation? If so, what support is available?

M4   How are students given opportunities to discuss their PDP portfolio with a personal tutor or careers advisor after graduation?

M5   How can students and graduates provide access to their PDP, or selected parts of their PDP, to potential employers (for example, through online or printed versions)?

Portability

M6   How does the institutional PDP comply with relevant interoperability standards and relevant government legislation?

M7   How are students provided with guidance regarding interoperability?

Links to CPD

M8   How are students alerted to the CPD 'agenda' for different potential occupations related to their discipline (and the potential role of PDP in training for this)?

M9   Where relevant, how are links made with the CPD systems offered by representative employers? [See also Aspect L: employability and employment, page 60.]

Commentary

Process versus product

While students - and staff - may talk about 'doing' or 'creating' a PDP, or in terms of working on their PDP, we should not forget that we are concerned with a **process** as much as a **product**. Personal development **planning** makes use of templates, questions and prompts for reflection, often based on the context of the discipline which build into a tangible entity - the personal development **plan**. However, it is the process of developing the PDP - the thinking, reflection, self-evaluation and forward planning and goal setting - which are the graduate attributes that we want our students to develop and which they will take with them into the world of work, as part of a positive approach to lifelong learning and continuing professional development (CPD). Thus, according to the CRA (2009c):

> The ability to effectively manage your own learning and development has been proven to be a key characteristic of high performing graduates 5-10 years into their career.

Lifelong learning and continuing professional development

Personal development planning does not stop when an individual leaves university and takes their first step on to the employment ladder. In addition to continuing to put into practice the skills and attributes developed during their previous experiences of PDP, graduates will also now be looking to CPD within their chosen profession. Personal development planning sits at the core of CPD in the world of work and for professional bodies. All of these schemes will be different.

Examples can be found in the field of healthcare, such as the CPD Planner developed by the British Dental Association (BDA, 2009); the PDP checklist and forms provided by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCP, 2009); and in other professional areas, such as town and regional planning (RTPI, 2009) and architecture (RIBA, 2009), which also encourage their professionals to use PDP as a way of identifying, recording and planning future CPD activities.

In the paper *Connecting PDP to Employers and the World of Work*, Edwards (2005) said:

> Overall, employers emphasised that PDP skills learnt by students in their undergraduate years are crucial (and indeed constitute the first concrete step) for lifelong learning, management of their own careers and to enable the widest possible contribution to performance improvement in organisations.

Some moves are currently being made to develop and pilot systems which involve learners and academics with employers and PSBs in using 'technology in the PDP process to generate the transferable records that support lifelong learning', such as the PDP4XL2 project funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) (JISC, 2008). Yet, in many respects the idea of developing a PDP for a period of time, whether at school or university, and then moving on to a new version is very positive. The PDP serves its

purpose for that period of time, with focus and activities centred on the immediate experience of being at school or university, but what moves with the individual to the new period of study or into employment are the skills of personal development planning. The PDP forms a continuous pathway to bridge the transition periods between school, college, university and employment. For some, that pathway may be discontinuous but if the individual chooses to embed the PDP process in his/her approach to lifelong learning and employability then it has the potential to enhance their future career prospects. Thus, according to the Institution of Civil Engineers (2009):

> CPD is about improving your performance at work, enhancing your career prospects, increasing your capacity for learning and being more capable and confident when faced with change.

Portability

The issues of process and product comprise part of the ongoing discussion around personal development planning, but are perhaps most clearly highlighted with regard to questions over the portability of the content of the PDP developed during university study. While graduates will be able to take with them the attitudes, skills and attributes with the potential to enhance their future employability gained through **the process** of developing a PDP, the physical (or digital) portablility of PDP as a **product** remains more challenging.

Questions students might ask include:

● can I access my PDP after I graduate?

● how will I be able to take my PDP with me for future use?

● will it be possible to integrate my university PDP with other personal development planning approaches in the workplace, for example, those currently being developed by vocational areas, such as medicine or town and regional planning, or the PSBs within those disciplinary areas?

Original intentions around PDP in the early years of its development envisaged an online system whereby student PDPs could be made portable through the application of technology by, for example, burning onto a CD or by giving students access to their PDPs after graduation. However, these ideas have largely fallen by the wayside due to practical and logistical concerns. A CD version of a PDP would be a static rather than dynamic development tool so would serve little purpose other than as a historical record. Meanwhile, the idea of lifelong access to areas of institutional servers for graduates, while appealing, would put an enormous strain on capacity, plus the associated technical support and resource, making this approach impractical.

Students can currently cut and paste elements of their PDP and transfer their documents/CV in this way, although it may be viewed by some as a clumsy approach to what should be a streamlined process.

And while there **may** be an ideal world of transfer between university and employer, we are in reality quite far away from this point; and moreover, there is scope for debate as to whether it is even desirable, because of the different purposes and models involved.

Aspect N: engaging postgraduate students and postdoctoral staff

PDP activities for taught postgraduate (PGT) students, research postgraduate (PGR) students and postdoctoral staff (PDS) will probably differ from those undertaken by undergraduate students (UGs): the institutional PDP policy, framework(s), guidance and branding should reflect this (see other Aspects). PGTs with first degrees from the UK will probably have some experience of PDP, whereas international students may not, and induction events should take differing experiences into account. The needs of PGT students are varied, reflecting the range of different modes of teaching and assessment used, and the different experiences of PGT students. In general, they are likely to be highly discipline-specific and more focused on employment and employability in the context of the particular qualification, so a stranded approach may be necessary. PDP activities for PGR students may be linked closely with the planning of project work, including, potentially, thesis monitoring schemes and generic skills training. PDS PDP schemes are likely to be focused on career development as a university teacher or researcher.

Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

General postgraduate

N1　How are the general PDP needs of PGT and PGR students and PD staff differentiated from those of UG students?

N2　In what ways has interoperability between UG and PG PDP frameworks been considered, both for students transferring within the institution and for students from elsewhere? [See also Aspect M: linking PDP and continuing professional development, page 63.]

N3　What is the nature of the progression in PDP activities from the UG framework(s) through PGT, PGR and PD levels?

N4　How are PDP induction needs of different cohorts of students dealt with at PGT, PGR and PD levels, particularly for international students?

N5　How do the PGT, PGR and PD frameworks assist students/staff at these different levels with career planning and employability?

N6　What are the implications of cultural and linguistic differences in a diverse student body to PDP implementation?

PGT PDP specifically

N7   In what ways are the discipline-specific needs of PGT international and home students taken into account in stranded approaches to induction, tailored PDP activities and guidance?

N8   Within the PGT PDP framework(s), how are discipline-specific training aspects (such as specialist skills) accommodated?

N9   How does the PGT PDP framework(s) assist students in planning for thesis project work and writing, if relevant?

N10   To what extent are the links between PDP and CPD made explicit to PGT students studying for vocational qualifications?

PGR PDP specifically

N11   Within the PGR PDP framework(s), how are thesis monitoring (or similar) activities integrated with action planning?

N12   In what ways are supervisors, thesis monitoring committees (or equivalent) or research line managers involved in PDP guidance for PGR students and PDS?

N13   Within the PGR PDP framework(s), how are the research skills outlined in the UK Research Councils' Joint Statement of Skills accommodated?

PDS PDP specifically

N14   In what ways does the PDS PDP framework articulate with university CPD frameworks and/or personal review schemes?

N15   How are staff introduced to the PDS PDP framework?

N16   What forms of encouragement or reward, as appropriate, are in place to support staff engagement with the PDS PDP?

N17   How does the PDS PDP framework link to aspects of CPD schemes operated by likely employer groups?

Commentary

This aspect covers three radically different groups of people: taught postgraduates, research postgraduates and postdoctoral staff. In fact, the latter group are employees, rather than students, a point that emphasises the differences. Even within each grouping, there are major differences in teaching or training approaches among the disciplines, and sometimes among degrees within a subject. Moreover, the groupings contain people with a wide variety of prior experience of education in general and of PDP. This commentary sets out to explore what factors need to be taken into account in designing a PDP framework for each type of user, and how each group can be engaged in the process, acknowledging that generalisations may be necessary and that there is sometimes little published work to support the assertions made.

PDP for taught postgraduates

The explicit (and sometimes implicit) expectation within the *Code of practice* (QAA, 2006b) and *Personal development planning: guidelines for institutional policy and practice* (QAA, 2009) is that this group are treated in a broadly similar fashion to undergraduate students.

However, the following 'special' factors need to be taken into account with this disparate group:

● students generally study for shorter periods of time than standard undergraduates, so there is less curriculum time to embed and follow up PDP activities

● the teaching curriculum may foster a very wide range of advanced postgraduate attributes and skills, ranging, for example, from surgery techniques to critical analysis

● the students may have widely differing backgrounds, including international students with no experience of PDP and cultural difficulties with bringing personal feelings and reflection to the fore, mixed with UK students, some of whom may have experienced the institution's undergraduate PDP framework

● degrees may have a vocational or advanced training element that may assist with students' motivation to engage with career-orientated PDP frameworks.

Taking these points into account, it seems inappropriate simply to shoehorn the group into the undergraduate PDP framework without tailoring it in significant ways. For example, if a major writing component is involved in the degree, then PDP might be used to support thinking on dissertation proposals and ethical issues, and the planning of research and writing. In addition, students might be expected to require a more advanced treatment of some of the 'standard' PDP activities, such as personality analysis and assessment of skills.

In terms of engagement, it has already been noted that this group is likely to be incentivised to engage with PDP. A focus on career planning might capitalise on this factor. On the negative side, some students may have established careers and associated CPD schemes that they will be returning to, so may find themselves patronised by a 'university PDP'.

There is anticipation of future work in developing PDP tailored to international taught postgraduates, from the Scottish Funding Council, HEA in Scotland and QAA Scotland through the Scottish Higher Education Employability Network (SHEEN).

PDP for research postgraduates

The provision of some form of PDP framework is an expectation within the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* (QAA, 2004), in particular via Precept 20, which states 'Institutions will provide opportunities for research students to maintain a record of personal progress, which includes reference to the development of research and other skills'.

The emphasis in PDP frameworks tends to be varied, as indicated by the data in table 6. 'Personal planning and review' appears in all frameworks and a CV focus is present in the majority, as with many undergraduate PDP frameworks. The key differences here are the

inclusion of research logs and research planning, while at least one framework is linked to an internal 'thesis monitoring' process that tracks student progress. The emphasis on skills assessment, training needs analysis and training planning is undoubtedly connected with HEI activities following the 'Roberts' Report' *Set for Success* (Roberts, 2002) especially the ensuing notion of postgraduate generic skills. These elements are generally built around the Research Councils' Joint Skills Statement (2001) or simplified derivatives of this.

Regarding engagement of postgraduate research students, it seems likely that the interweaving of PDP frameworks with both 'research log/thesis monitoring' and 'research skills training' aspects will provide an impetus. It is also commonplace that such research students think deeply about career directions as they progress - this may mean that they more readily identify with tools that assist in this process. Difficulties with engagement may occur due to the wide geographical dispersion of students, differing modes of study and lack of willingness on the part of supervisors to offer support.

Component (UKGRAD phrasing)	% institutions with component as a focus of PDP practice
Personal reflection and review	100
Skills assessment	94
Training needs analysis	94
Collecting CV information	88
Research log	82
Planning training	76
Research planning	59
Input into HEI transcripts and institutional records	24

Table 6: components of research postgraduate PDP frameworks. The data was compiled from 17 case studies highlighted on the UK GRAD website (as was) at November 2008. Other components, not noted here, included: thesis monitoring, career planning, professional presentation, signposting tools and resources, and student-supervisor relationships.

Postdoctoral staff

There is little published information regarding PDP for postdoctoral staff. In many respects, their needs in this area may be covered by appraisal and CPD schemes operating in their HEI. Some research postgraduate PDP frameworks (UK GRAD, 2008) are designed to include postdoctoral staff. It might be expected that this group would be highly motivated by career planning aspects of PDP.

Appendix: suggested workshop models

This Appendix contains four possible models for workshops focused on implementing the Toolkit:

Model A: PDP discussion workshop aims to stimulate discussion around the purpose, direction and current success of PDP within an institution.

Model B: student engagement workshop aims to evaluate and explore the levels of student engagement with PDP and to support discussion around future directions.

Model C: staff engagement workshop aims to evaluate and explore the level of staff engagement with PDP and to support discussion around future directions.

Model D: new staff workshop aims to promote the concept of PDP to new academic staff.

Table 7 indicates which models might be most relevant to the different groups of stakeholders identified in table 1 on page 5, with the exception of educational developers, who are assumed to be acting as lead/joint facilitators for all workshops.

Stakeholder participation	Workshop model			
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**
Policy makers and managers	■		■	
PDP developers	■	■	■	■
Academic staff	■	■	■	■
Learning technologists (as appropriate)		■		
Careers and/or employability staff	■		■	■
Quality review team			■	
Students and their reps	■	■	■	■
PSBs and employers	▨			

Table 7: groups of individuals most likely to be involved in the development sessions described in this Appendix.

Key: black shading indicates that the model is likely to be of high relevance, while grey shading indicates reasonably high relevance. There is no intended implication from lack of shading that a specific model would be wholly inappropriate for a stakeholder group: this may depend on institutional and discipline circumstances.

Workshop model A: PDP discussion workshop (2.5 hrs)

This workshop aims to raise awareness of the place and purpose of PDP within an institution/school/faculty and could be used for a number of purposes dependent on the current profile of PDP in that institution/school/faculty and the current level of staff awareness/engagement. It could be used, for example, to re-engage staff with the concept at the beginning of a new academic year; to reflect at the end of an academic year; or, in conjunction with the introduction, to update or re-launch a current or new approach to PDP.

Part 1   Welcome to the session and brief introduction from a relevant senior manager (VP or DVC level if this is an institution-wide event, or Dean if a school or faculty-wide event, to highlight the importance placed on PDP) who will also outline the aims of the session (10 minutes).

Part 2   Lead facilitator to ask each individual to reflect on the following question for a couple of minutes, then to share with a partner (or triads if it is a large group) and discuss for a further couple of minutes - 'What role does PDP play in this institution/school/faculty…?' (10 minutes).

Part 3   Lead facilitator takes a comment from each pair/triad and writes on a flipchart/whiteboard. This should be seen simply as a recording process at this point (5 minutes).

Part 4   Three stations will have been set up within the room, one 'manned' by a student (or their representative); another by a member of careers/employability staff; and one by a PSB representative or employer, each station focusing on a relevant trigger from the Toolkit (see below and How to use the Toolkit, p 8) such as 'demonstrating existing personal development plans (or parts of)' or 'providing real life case studies concerning outcomes of PDP'. The workshop participants then 'visit' each station in small groups and have an opportunity to discuss PDP in light of the perspective provided by each station facilitator and each station trigger (15 minutes per station - 45 minutes in total).

Part 5   Break (15 minutes).

Part 6   The small groups return to separate tables to reflect on what, for them, are the most important issues emerging in relation to PDP, for example, student engagement or embedding within the curricula, in light of what they have heard at the stations (10 minutes).

Part 7   The small groups select (or are allocated) an aspect (can be provided on handouts) from the Toolkit appropriate to their emerging key issues and are asked to consider five questions within that aspect that they judge to be key in their situation (20 minutes).

Part 8   Group returns to plenary and generates a second list based on their reflections from the stations and their work with the SAQs. The original and second list are then compared/discussed with a view to exploring the values and importance placed on PDP and possible future directions/developments (30 minutes).

Part 9   Lead facilitator summarises and closes the session (5 minutes).

Part 10   Evaluation of the session itself as appropriate, with a view to evaluation of the **impact** of the session at a later date.

Workshop model B: student engagement workshop (2 hrs)

This workshop aims to evaluate and explore the levels of student engagement with PDP and to support discussions around future directions. Ideally this would be a jointly-led session by a student (or their representative) with a member of academic staff. It could be run at institutional or school/faculty/discipline level and could also be used with students' union sabbatical officers/other student representatives and by academics with groups of undergraduate students.

Part 1   Welcome to the session and brief introduction from the joint-leads, plus outline of the aims of the session. The participants should be provided with an overview of the current level of student engagement with PDP at the institutional/school/faculty/discipline level, as appropriate, via a short presentation with handouts, and introduced to the suggested key issues in relation to student engagement, for example, high levels of engagement in some disciplines but less so in others, challenges in relation to the stability of the platform delivering the system, and so on (15 minutes).

Part 2   Participants are divided into small groups and each group is provided with an aspect from the Toolkit and asked to discuss a selection of questions they consider to be most relevant in light of the issues raised in the presentation (30 minutes).

Part 3   Each group reports back from their discussion, and points are captured on a flipchart by the facilitators (15 minutes).

Part 4   Break (10 minutes).

Part 5   An 'action plan' or 'next steps' proposal is developed from the points on the flipchart by re-dividing the participants into small groups and asking each group to discuss two/three points to develop a distinct section of the action plan or next steps proposal (30 minutes).

Part 6   Small groups feed back on their section of the action plan or next steps proposal which is recorded by the facilitators (15 minutes).

Part 7   Summary and close by the facilitators (5 minutes).

Part 8   Evaluation of the session itself as appropriate, with a view to evaluation of the **impact** of the session at a later date.

Part 9   The full action plan/next steps proposal should be distributed by the facilitators to the workshop participants and other relevant stakeholders following the session. A follow-up workshop to review progress is recommended.

Workshop model C: staff engagement workshop (2 hrs)

This workshop aims to evaluate and explore the levels of staff engagement with PDP and to support discussions around future directions. Ideally, this would be a jointly-led session by an educational developer with a member of academic staff and also a student (or their representative). It could be run at institutional or school/faculty/discipline level.

Part 1   Welcome to the session and brief introduction from the joint-leads plus outline of the aims of the session. The participants should be provided with an overview of the current level of staff engagement with PDP at the institutional/school/faculty/discipline level, as appropriate, via a short presentation with handouts, and introduced to the suggested key issues in relation to staff engagement, for example, differing levels of value placed on the PDP process, lack of knowledge about PDP (15 minutes).

Part 2   Participants are divided into small groups and each group is provided with an aspect from the Toolkit and asked to discuss the questions they consider to be most relevant in light of the issues raised in the presentation (30 minutes).

Part 3   Each group reports back from their discussion, and points are captured on a flipchart by the facilitators (15 minutes).

Part 4   Break (10 minutes).

Part 5   An 'action plan' or 'next steps' proposal is developed from the points on the flipchart by re-dividing the participants into small groups and asking each group to discuss two/three points from the flipchart to develop a distinct section of the action plan or next steps proposal (30 minutes).

Part 6   Small groups feed back on their section of the action plan or next steps proposal which is recorded by the facilitators (15 minutes).

Part 7   Summary and close by the facilitators (5 minutes).

Part 8   Evaluation of the session itself as appropriate, with a view to evaluation of the **impact** of the session at a later date.

Part 9   The full action plan/next steps proposal should be distributed by the facilitators to the workshop participants and other relevant stakeholders following the session. A follow-up workshop to review progress is recommended.

Workshop model D: new staff workshop (1.5 hrs)

This workshop aims to introduce and promote the concept of PDP to new staff. It could be run at institutional or school/faculty/discipline level for new staff as a stand-alone workshop, as part of new staff induction or as a component of a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in HE programmes. Use should be made of relevant Toolkit triggers (see below and How to use the Toolkit, p 8) and aspects from the Toolkit appropriate to the specific group of participants.

Part 1   Facilitator introduces the topic and the aims of the session and makes a brief presentation outlining the role and value placed on PDP within the institution. The presentation should also include the aims of the PDP process; what form PDP takes at the institution; and the benefits in relation to supporting student learning and employability (15 minutes).

Part 2   Participants should be put into small groups to discuss their initial reactions to and/or previous experience of PDP. Ideally, each small group will be facilitated by an educational developer or student (or their representative) or member of careers service/employability (15 minutes).

Part 3   The small groups should then be asked to consider questions from an aspect of the Toolkit most relevant to them. For example, new academic staff on a PG Certificate programme could be asked to consider Aspect G (page 37) and Aspect H (page 42) or a group of manager/administrators could look at Aspect A (page 12) (30 minutes).

Part 4   Break (5 minutes).

Part 5   Small groups feed back their comments which are detailed on a flipchart by the facilitator (15 minutes).

Part 6   Each individual is asked to reflect on an area of the discussion that they would personally like to explore further and to make notes to this effect, for example, new members of staff with regard to finding out how PDP is embedded within the curriculum in their disciplinary area (5 minutes).

Part 7   Summary and close by the facilitator (5 minutes).

Part 8   Evaluation of the session itself as appropriate, with a view to evaluation of the **impact** of the session at a later date.

Glossary

All terms are defined here in relation to their meaning in the context of PDP and, specifically, to the meaning attached to them by this Toolkit. Alternative definitions may exist in other contexts. Readers should reinterpret terms accordingly. Cross references to other glossary terms are indicated by **bold text**.

Academic literacies approach: academic literacy may be defined as the capacity to undertake study and research, and to communicate findings and knowledge, in a manner appropriate to the particular disciplinary conventions and scholarly standards expected at university level. An 'academic literacies approach' refers to the idea of a gradual development of competence.

Action planning: a process which will help a student focus on their academic, personal and career objectives and decide what specific steps are needed in order to achieve goals. Each objective needs to have clearly defined targets with associated action points that can be realistically achieved in a specified timescale.

Bolt-on: a model of PDP that is not an integral part of, or embedded in, the academic curriculum, but runs parallel to it, perhaps as a separate module.

Career planning: a component of careers education, career development learning or career management skills provision within HE and refers to strategies an individual can usefully deploy to aid them in their pathway or progress through life.

Constructive alignment: the notion, according to Biggs (for example, Biggs, 1996) that effective teaching and learning occurs when projected learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment protocols are designed to fit together. Thus, 'intended learning outcomes' are stated at the outset of a course of teaching that define what students are expected to be able to achieve by the end of the course; these are aligned both with the teaching methods and activities, and, crucially, with the mode of assessment and the marking criteria used for this.

Continuing professional development (CPD): the process by which employees maintain and develop professional skills and knowledge relevant to their employment and **employability**.

Curriculum mapping: a process whereby the coverage of a particular aspect of learning or teaching (here, PDP-related activities) is described in relation to curricular events such as lectures, topics and/or modules. This may be achieved by creating a grid showing diagrammatically where and when PDP-related activities take place and which may indicate developmental aspects of the coverage.

Dearing/Garrick definition (of PDP): this is the first reference to 'a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development' as part of Progress Files in the *National Committee of Inquiry in Higher Education Report* (1997), commonly referred to as the Dearing Report and the Scottish Committee (The Garrick Report) (1997) - see QAA (2009).

Effective learning (framework): the Effective Learning Framework, or ELF, arose from a project sponsored by QAA Scotland whose outcomes were published in 2007. It centres on a model that frames PDP in relation to effective learning. Focused Learner Questions (FLQs) are a fundamental part of ELF. The process of devising and answering these questions helps to develop the ability of the learner to 'self-audit' or 'self-review' themselves and their experiences and thereby assist **reflection**.

Embedding: the introduction of activities related to personal development planning as an integral and integrated part of the curriculum and hence, via the principle of **constructive alignment**, their inclusion within the intended earning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and, importantly, assessment.

Employability: there are many definitions of employability, but in the higher education context the following meaning is generally accepted: 'a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation(s) to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy' (Yorke, 2006).

Engagement of students: the act of paying full attention to, and taking part wholeheartedly in, activities (relating to PDP).

Engagement of staff: a positive attitude and commitment to the PDP concept and process.

e-portfolio: a systematic collection of digital documents and artefacts (files), created to provide evidence of a student's reflection and learning and hence a record of his/her intellectual development. These are generally linked to curricular activities and may or may not be linked to PDP activities.

Formative reflective exercises: a type of exercise that would promote a student's self-development and would not necessarily be assessed. Compare 'formative assessment' which is designed to provide learners with feedback in words on progress and inform development, but does not contribute to the overall assessment (QAA, 2000).

Graduate attributes: skills, competencies and attitudes that a graduate may be expected to have developed through higher education. These can be specific, shared or generic - see Research Teaching Linkages: Enhancing Graduate Attributes Quality Enhancement Theme (QAA, 2006c), which refers to developing a graduate who can contribute effectively to the cultural, civic, ethical, and economic future.

Graduateness: the essential attributes expected, by academia and employers, from someone graduating with a degree.

HEAR: the Higher Education Achievement Report (see Universities UK, 2007). This incorporates the original data set for the higher education transcript from the Guidelines for HE Progress Files and the requirements of the European Diploma Supplement, and proposes the recognition of a broader, verifiable, range of learner achievement by higher education providers.

Interoperability: the ability of systems (especially computer-based systems) to work together, for example, by 'seamless' exchange of information. In this context, therefore, the ability to transfer information between **PDP frameworks** or to a **CPD** scheme.

(Intended) learning outcome (ILO): a statement, generally by the teacher or organiser of a course, of what a student is expected to be able achieve by the end of the course. Sometimes referred to as a learning objective.

Marking criteria: the definitions of how the marker will reward performance in assessment, generally provided as a series of general statements attached to the different grades or grade bands in the marking system.

Marking scheme: a detailed indication of how marks will be allocated for different aspects of performance in assessment.

Metacognition; metacognitive outcomes: in the context of PDP, metacognition is about self-awareness regarding the students' learning, and their capacity to reflect on, in and for action. It is seen as subsuming elements of 'learning how to learn'; of reflection in, on and for practice; and a capacity for self-regulation (Yorke and Knight, 2004).

PDP framework(s): the scheme (or schemes) devised within an HE institution to support personal development planning. This (these) might consist of identifiable branding, such as a tag (for example 'My PDP'), a logo, a conceptual framework and corresponding resources underpinning student activities, in many cases an **e-portfolio**-based system for recording **reflection** and evidence, and, potentially, generic templates for managing the outcomes of reflection and planning.

Peer assessment: assessment involving marking by fellow students.

Personalisation: being learner-centred and responsive to individuals. There has not been as much emphasis to date within higher education as there has been in other sectors (schools) and contexts (health), but this is changing. The current situation is described fully by Knox et al (2008) and includes reference to the perception that personalisation can contribute to maximising the benefits of PDP to students.

Portability: the feature of being able to capture information from a **PDP framework** and store it, usually digitally, in a transferable (portable) medium or to transfer it to another PDP framework or to a **CPD** scheme. See also **interoperability**.

Postgraduate generic skills: (generally) the framework of skills outlined within the *Joint Statement of Skills Training Requirements of Research Postgraduate* - the joint statement of the UK Research Councils' Training Requirements for Research Students (see UK Research Councils, 2001). This sets out the skills that doctoral research students funded by the UK Research Councils would be expected to develop during their research training.

Professionalism: this is linked to the idea of certain attributes and attitudes that are integral to the professional standards endorsed by professional and statutory bodies. For example, The Royal College of Physicians defines medical professionalism as 'a set of values, behaviours, and relationships that underpins the trust the public has in doctors'. It regards 'integrity, compassion, altruism, continuous improvement, excellence and working in partnership with members of the wider healthcare team' as being vital in underpinning that professionalism.

Progress file: in the sense of **Dearing/Garrick**, a student's personal development plan and **transcript** (to be replaced by **HEAR**).

Reflective practitioner: a common term within education and health care professions. For example, reflective practitioners in medicine may review and analyse their experiences with the aim of improving their skills and enhancing their future patient care.

Reflection: the process of personal contemplation on events in the past, especially in this context, learning, and the re-evaluation of experience on the basis of these thoughts and the feelings that arise from them. **Deep reflection:** 'Reflection can be superficial and little more than descriptive or can be deep and transformative (and involved in the transformative stage of learning)' (Moon, 2001).

SMART: a model that was developed by psychologists as a tool to help people set and reach their goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound).

Template: in the context of **e-portfolios** and PDP, part of an e-portfolio used to store information and, potentially, content related to personal development planning. Analogous to a table in written text, this may be part-completed as a prompt to student input.

Transcript: the (developing) record of a student's achievement at university, normally validated in some way by the relevant institution. A key component of the **Progress File**.

Transition: the move into higher education from school, further education or elsewhere. The increasing diversity of learners, where they have come from and the range and diversity of higher education provision mean that this is a developing area. Potentially, PDP can support transition. There is discussion of the issues in Whittaker (2008).

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