A Policy on Personal Development Planning

Context of the Policy
Dearing (NICHE 1997) recommended the provision of a Progress File for all students, to help make their achievements more explicit and to support them to identify progress throughout lifelong learning. The government then looked to the sector bodies to take responsibility for this initiative. In February 2001 Universities UK, SCoP, and QAA produced ‘Guidelines for HE Progress Files’ to support HE institutions in developing and introducing Progress Files. Based on these guidelines implementation of Progress Files has been working towards a compliance date of 2004 for the availability of Transcripts and 2005 for a policy on PDP for all students.

In Chapter 4 ‘Teaching and Learning – delivering excellence’ of the White paper ‘The Future of Higher Education’, this notion was further reinforced:

‘We must ensure that we have robust ways of describing, measuring and recording student achievement which are helpful to the student, to institutions, to employers and to other stakeholders. Existing arrangements need to be strengthened in a number of ways.’[Para 4.7]

The National Context
The practitioner network, Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) has been active in the sector in supporting and researching practice. A UUK survey in 2003 indicated that 80% of universities have made a start. The results of a second survey conducted in 2004, about to be published, estimates 40% of HEI’s have a policy in place.

There is a recognition from QAA that full implementation will take a number of years and that institutions will need to implement recommendations as opportunities arise, e.g. at revalidation of programmes. QAA have no specific expectations for full compliance by 2005 but there are a number of developments that are sustaining pressure to keep the PDP agenda moving forwards.

- Transcripts are likely to evolve as they are incorporated into the Diploma Supplement and eventually the Europass
- Themes from Tomlinson on personal review, planning and guidance and transfer of achievement through the new diploma.
- Recommendations from Burgess for incorporation of existing initiatives on Progress Files/PDP into new degree classification systems describing more meaningfully achievement in HE
- QAA revisions to Code of Practice, e.g. on Assessment (2005)
- QAA New APL guidelines (Sept 2004)
- QAA Foundation Degree qualification benchmarks (Nov 2004)

The Institutional Context
The rationale for introducing PDP is to further to our Mission to maintain excellence in learning and teaching and enable students to combine academic and professional studies recognising the importance of preparing them for work and/or their continuing careers.

PDP can:
- enhance the whole student experience
- support widening participation
• aid retention
• enhance employability and progress to further study
• identify progress with key/transferable skills

Links to other Strategies
The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2002-05 aims to:
• Address the diverse academic and professional learning needs of a wide range of entrants in order to improve student achievement and retention;
• Continue to develop academic strengths and professional skills of the highest order while promoting transferable skills (including key skills) and an ability to reflect on learning outcomes in order to enhance employability and lifelong learning

Objectives for the Learning and Teaching strategy for 2002 - 2005 are as follows:
• the development of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment that support and retain a diverse range of students including non-traditional entrants; disabled students; and students from diverse cultural backgrounds and minority ethnic groups;
• the development of flexible approaches to learning including the effective use of e-learning and e-support and guidance;
• the integration and development of employability skills, including transferable and key skills, in academic and professional programmes of learning;
• the development of the ability to engage in and record the outcomes of reflective learning as a basis for personal development planning in relation to personal, educational and career objectives

The University College Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) bid for 2002-05 identified a commitment to progress towards implementation of PDP in 2005/6. Support for implementation will be provided by the LTEU.

Existing Institutional Practice
At an institutional level aspects of Personal Development Planning are already available to students. In the vocational-professional areas of CCCUC Health and Education, students produce a portfolio record which is directly related to professional competencies or standards. Both also utilise portfolio records of development and incorporate reflective action planning as an essential part of their assessment of learning outcomes, competencies or standards. As part of the UUK survey in 2003 we estimated that for approximately 60% of our students, elements of PDP are part of their academic experience and often these are an integral part of the qualification/assessment process.

In the BA/BSc scheme few subjects actively engage with PDP in a systematic way. A 2004 survey showed that the student perception of a ‘personal tutor’ was not well defined, although over 80% identified with a tutor. Even when personal tutoring is active there is generally no structured approach to PDP outlined below.

Piloting of approaches to PDP have been continuous since 2001. A project run by the Careers and Student Development in 2001-2002 used a paper-based system to build a file of evidence. In 2002 a pilot explored the use of an electronic recording system from UEA. Based on the experience of this pilot the LTEU designed a recording system called PROGRESS which drew on previous experience with
supporting e-learners. The evaluation of pilots in three faculties during 2003-04 indicated that a redesign was required. In 2004 over 700 students in the Faculty of Health were introduced to the PROGRESS system and engage with PDP as an integral part of their programme of study.

Transcripts are provided for all students from 2003-4. Registry is currently providing the transcript element of Progress Files for students that conform to national guidance. The data is obtained from the student record system which has been customised to provide the required output.

Outcomes of PDP

PDP and Employability

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 their capability during recruitment activities. If the process is continuous rather than fragmented or piecemeal it is felt to be of even higher value. Ways in which a structured PDP process might assist students/employers is to:

- inculcate self-awareness;
- assist students to articulate values and experiences;
- inform recruitment
- support career planning by identifying needs and meeting these;
- provide a continuum with recording and reviewing processes used by employers and professional bodies;
- maintain performance and encourage life-long learning
- add value to the process of reference-writing by institutions.

Evidence of Effectiveness

The only research so far undertaken in his relatively new field about the impact of PDP on learning is from a commissioned systematic review undertaken by the EPPI Centre at the Institute of Education. Kiwan, Sutcliffe, Simpson and Houghton (2003) claim ‘PDP is a proxy for a number of constructs that attempt to connect and draw benefit from reflection, recording, action planning and actually doing things that are aligned to the action plan. The actions and experiences of doing are connected to and draw upon concrete learning experiences in a wide range of formal curricula and extra curricula contexts’ (p.2). Gough et al (op cit) concluded that ‘the processes and actions that underlie PDP do have a positive impact on student attainment and approaches to learning’ (p.6).
Annex A: PDP POLICY

What is Personal Development Planning (PDP)

The HE Progress File which is now being introduced across all levels of higher education. The Progress File will:
- provide each student with a transcript - a record of their learning and achievement
- and a means by which the student can 'monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development.

The term Personal Development Planning (PDP) is used to denote the later process. The University College is committed to providing an HE Progress File for all students who require one.

Definitions

PDP
'a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and / or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.'

PDP is:
- a structured process that is integral to higher level learning;
- concerned with learning in an holistic sense (both academic and non-academic);
- something that an individual does with guidance and support: the latter perhaps decreasing as personal capability is developed so that it becomes self-sustaining;
- a process that involves self-reflection, the creation of personal records, planning and monitoring progress towards the achievement of personal objectives;
- intended to improve the capacity of individuals to communicate their learning to others who are interested in it (e.g. academic staff and employers);
- applicable to all types of delivery and learning contexts (e.g. on-campus, at-a-distance, work-based).

Transcripts

The transcripts provided for students should:
- conform to national guidelines and recognise differences between students and programmes;
- be automatically available from the Registry for all students engaged in accredited HE courses at designated assessment points;
- be prepared in such a way as to facilitate transfer using emerging interoperability standards (e.g. IMS, XML);
- be capable of interfacing with a student portal once available;
- allow for subsequent developments in reported criteria (e.g. addition of a PDP record).

Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Aims

The primary objective for PDP is to improve the capacity of individuals to understand what and how they are learning, and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning.
PDP is intended to help students:

- become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners;
- understand how they are learning and relate their learning to a wider context;
- improve their general skills for study and career management;
- articulate their personal goals and evaluate progress towards them;
- develop a positive attitude to learning throughout life.

**Rationale for PDP**

The introduction of HE Progress Files is a key part of the Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy. The University College believes that the reflective action planning skills on which PDP is based are integral to knowing how to learn in different contexts and to the ability to transfer learning to new ones.

PDP will:

- contribute to our aspiration to be a centre of teaching excellence.
- form an important part in our approach to widening participation and the challenge this brings for retention. We see the link between PDP and the role of the tutor as a key strategy for engaging students and staff in recognising and meeting the changing needs of students and accessing appropriate resources and support. It will also enable staff be more proactive in identifying ‘at risk students
- enable tutors to plan and make more effective use of the limited time available for tutoring.
- support and enhance the preparation of references
- help students prepare for interviews and applications by developing and broadening a candidate’s understanding of their ‘transferable’ competencies relating to thinking in new situations and addressing new tasks and challenges, particularly in time-constrained or group situations.

**PDP systems within the University College should:**

1. meet national policy/guidelines for PDP in HE;
2. recognise the diversity of our programmes in meeting the requirements of funding bodies and professions as well as differences in course design where it impacts on PDP, e.g. preparation of professional portfolios in Health, Education and CPD programmes;
3. be relatively simple and motivating and not generally be perceived as ‘burdensome’ by staff or students;
4. be consistent across the elements of an accredited programme, i.e. across a Joint Honours Undergraduate or Professional CPD Programme.
5. offer students the facility to create and subsequently modify Action Plans based on learning skills assessment outcomes, future learning/developmental opportunities, personal goals and perceived gaps and weaknesses;
6. involve feedback from a tutor(s) (or other designated members of staff) based on the outcome of structured conversations and/or their review of a student’s PDP;
7. provide a record of evidence and personal reflection about knowledge, attributes, skills and experience from which students can extract information to construct: CVs, Personal Statements, or letters of application for a variety of audiences;
8. encourage students to record experience and achievement outside of the academic experience;
9. be capable of providing statements in a form that could be imported to part(s) of the HE Progress File;
10. act as a ‘linking’ stage in the sequence of similar types of development records/progress files used by professional bodies and in general approaches to continuing professional development and life-long learning.

A PDP Entitlement
1. The University College will provide opportunities for PDP and guidance to support the process.
2. The nature and scope of opportunities for PDP and the recording and support strategies, will be determined by each Faculty/Scheme and available as a written policy.
3. At the start of an HE programme, students will be introduced to the requirements and arrangements for PDP within their programme.
4. Students will be provided with opportunities for PDP that reflect each academic level of their programme.
5. The rationale for PDP at different stages of a programme will be explained for the benefit of students (e.g. in student or programme handbooks).
6. The ultimate responsibility for deriving benefit from PDP will rest with each student.

The University College will:
7. provide transcripts for all student of their academic progress
8. provide paper or electronic recording systems to support the PDP process
9. provide staff development and training in operating the PDP process
10. provide tutors to engage with students in a periodic review of their progress
11. provide an accessible transcript of summary statement from the Personal Development Plan following the completion of a programme (where completed by the student).

The tutors will:
12. provide an introduction to a PDP process
13. engage with students identified as ‘tutees’ in reviewing their progress at intervals identified by the Faculty/Scheme PDP policy.

The students will:
14. be encouraged to engage in an introduction to the PDP system at the start of their programme.
15. be encouraged to maintain a PDP record as prescribed by Faculty/Scheme PDP policy.

A PDP Record
Maintaining a record of PDP activity is accepted as a vital part of the reflective process within PDP. It stimulates reflective action planning and enables students to share their progress and planning with others, (e.g. tutors). A record of engaging with the PDP process is likely to feed into the HE Progress File transcript and should be capable of transferring into life-long learning Development Records/Progress Files used in the Education sector, or through Continuing Professional Development schemes in professional bodies. At a national and international level electronic
interoperability standards are still a matter of debate and there is still development to be undertaken, however it could become policy in the future that PDPs would be readily transferable beyond the confines of a particular educational experience.

Both paper-based and electronic systems are in use locally and nationally. The University College expects that any PDP system, paper or electronic, would meet the following criteria:

**An electronic record of PDP should:**
- meet the Entitlement statement above;
- be provided via the web for both students and staff (in terms of administration)
- support equality of access by providing an interface which can conform to accessibility guidelines;
- provide 'non-electronic' alternatives which are available on request;
- ultimately be used in conjunction with the student record system that already contains students' personal details and information about students' progress with study programmes (part of the student portal, when available);
- be used in conjunction with planned and structured conversations with a designated member of staff, with the aim to support students' reflection upon and understanding of their academic and personal development and working;
- be something that tutors can access in order to discuss action plans, monitor student involvement, and provide support when requested;
- have the capacity to transfer data (e.g. by the use of XML technology) to and from other Progress File facilities that students encounter before and after their study at a Higher Education Institution;
- provide an export facility to collect relevant text from the PDP that can be used to support employability, (e.g. prepare CVs, Personal Statements etc);
- incorporate security features such as a time out facility, where inactivity of a given time indicates that the user has left the progress file and therefore logged out automatically. In addition, a log out button must be present on every page allowing the user to log out whenever he/she has finished
- meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

The University College has developed its own PDP recording system which will allow further development as the experience of staff and students with PDP is embedded. The system supports students and tutors to engage in a dialogue about progress without the need to always do this face-to-face. The system has been designed to be generic enough to be used across the institution and the technology be as 'transparent' as possible. The new system has been named PROGRESS.

**Paper-based recording should:**
- meet the entitlement statement above;
- provide a template for recording planning or be an integral part of a portfolio of personal/professional development;
- meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

The recording tool does not itself provide a PDP system. The currency of PDP for the student relies on integrating recording with the academic and wider experience whilst engaged in a programme of study. Its successful operation will require tutors and student support services actively participating in reviewing the PDP throughout the programme of study.
Accessibility and security

The PDP system will need to meet the varied needs of:

- disabled users;
- users for whom a transcript/PDP in English is of little or no value;
- users who have limited, or no, access to the technological base required to access electronically-held data;
- users with overseas qualifications, learning experiences, or employment which do not map easily to the national system/schema.

The system will need adequate provision for the requirements of Data Protection Act when:

- transferring personal data between education providers;
- supplying PDP data to 3rd parties beyond the education provider.

Timetable 2004-06

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<th>Responsibility</th>
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<td>Committee stages for policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Audit /Action Planning</td>
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References:

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Universities UK, ScoP, QAA (n.d.) Guidelines for HE Progress Files.: Author