Personal Development Planning

Background

*'We recommend that Institutions of Higher Education, over the medium term, develop a **Progress File**. The File should consist of two elements:*

*• A **Transcript** recording student achievement, which should follow a common format devised by institutions collectively through their representative bodies;*

*• **A means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development** (Personal Development Planning/Recording).'*

Sir Ron Dearing, National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997.

QAA, Universities UK, CoSHEP (now Universities Scotland) and ScoP (now GuildHE) recommended, in line with the response of Government to the Dearing recommendation 20 (above) that **all** Higher Education institutions implement opportunities for **all** students to undertake Personal Development Planning.

The good news is that there are already many such files circulating in education and industry under different names e.g. Progress File, Personal Development File, Personal Log, Career Portfolios, Reflective Log, Personal and Academic Record, Project Management Record and Personal Development Portfolios.

The National Guidelines define Personal Development Planning as *'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'* and, presumably, any file which enables this process is acceptable.

Implementation Challenges

There are major challenges when trying to implement PDP in typical physics or chemistry departments:

- staff resistance *(answering the 'what's in it for me' question and also staff capability issues)*
- student resistance *(… but it's not physics/chemistry! … will it/should it be assessed?)*
- relationship to the core business of teaching and learning *(curriculum & time implications)*
- mode of delivery and scope of the PDP contents *(and hence issues related to confidentiality)*

Countering Staff Resistance

The policy states that the purpose of the PDP element of the Higher Education Progress File is all about student development, 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 their achievement
- encourage a positive attitude to learning throughout life

Clearly there is an obvious synergy between these purposes and the traditional role of academic tutoring. Personal Development Planning has the capability to generate better information for departmental student files and also form the basis for more structured, annual (or more frequent) tutorial review sessions.

Countering Student Resistance

Ideally, industrial companies (and also research groups) want to see evidence that any new graduate is:

- well-rounded and team-oriented
- a pragmatic problem solver
- enthusiastic and dynamic
- scientifically curious
- optimistic
- determined – it's a tough world
- self-reliant/resilient
- able to cope with pressure

and, whereas conventional examination results do not give any direct evidence of these attributes, personal development portfolios certainly should become the vehicle for presenting such evidence.

Delivery Mechanisms

Institutions are trying different delivery systems, as exemplified by *web-based electronic* (e.g. the Nottingham University PADSHE project, RAPID at Loughborough or LUSID at Liverpool) or more traditional, paper-based delivery. We believe that students need the support of another individual or individuals to make these files effective and files are perhaps most easily introduced via personal or academic tutoring. However some institutions could not operate such systems because of the size of the student intake. Alternative implementations might be within a workplace supervision process (for only a subset of students) or, say, within skills modules, for example Project Work or Career Management.

National Initiatives

Higher Education Academy

Nationwide generic resources and studies can be found at:
http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/pdp

PDP in Scotland

Information about the evolving Personal Development Planning scene in Scotland can be found at:
http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/aboutus/scotland/institutions/pdpforum

Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA)

The Centre provides a national network organisation which supports good practice in Personal Development Planning and promotes the sharing of experience. For more information, visit:

http://www.recordingachievement.org/

Institutional Models

Project PADSHE (Nottingham)

The acronym stands for 'Personal and Academic Development for Students in Higher Education' and, after FDTL1 funding, this Nottingham-led project now involves over 8000 students and their tutors in seven partner UK universities. It has used paper-based PARs (Personal & Academic Records) which are downloadable from the PADSHE website. This has led to the further development of ePARs, a web-based system. The relevant websites to visit are:

http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/padshe/
https://epars.nottingham.ac.uk/shared/htm/about.asp

Project LUSID (Liverpool)

An interactive web-based PDP tool has been devised. It supports recording, planning, reflection, skills auditing, automatic CV construction, skills guidance and a reporting facility, which is available for use by any HEI. The website, which contains lots of background and technical information, is:

http://lusid.liv.ac.uk/

University of Leeds

A comprehensive discussion of implementation, good practice and paper versus web-based, and some useful downloadable examples, can be found at:

http://www.leeds.ac.uk/pdp/

Imperial College

A staff development model has been developed and further information can be found at:

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/careers/staff/staff/pdp

Manchester Metropolitan University

The framework developed by the Centre for Learning and Teaching for Manchester Met, is given at:

http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/pdp/

University College Worcester

A description of their Student Qualities Profile system can be found at:
http://www.worc.ac.uk/LTMain/sqp/index1.html

PDP Projects

Undergraduate Skills Record

The Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) has developed a special record for undergraduates in booklet and downloadable pfd formats. For the latest information on this, visit:

http://www.rsc.org/ugskills

Development Project 'Persuading physicists to engage in PDP' (Leeds)

Dr Alison Voice has been active with the implementation of PDPs into the Department of Physics & Astronomy at the University of Leeds for the past three years. This project funding enabled Dr Voice to improve the documentation, which is freely available:

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/physsci/projects/detail/completed_projects/
persuading_physicists_to_engage_in_pdp

Acknowledgements

Physical Sciences Centre PDP Toolkit

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/physsci/publications/toolkits