



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING STRATEGY

2017

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1. An Overview:

Now days, all HEIs are expected to have in place their own policies for the implementation of Personal Development Planning (PDP). PDP is part of the Progress File for Higher Education. The Progress File will provide each student with:

- A transcript - a record of their learning and achievement
- A means by which the student can 'monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development'. It is this process which is referred to as PDP

This guide, aims to provide an introduction to PDP for all academics along with references to further resources to support those implementing PDP and Progress files into the curriculum of the degree programme.

What is PDP?

Personal Development Planning is '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'(Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), 2009a, p.2).

PDP at Ada The national College for Digital Skills is 'an inclusive process, open to all learners at all levels. Effective PDP improves the capacity of individuals to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning and to understand what they learn and how they learn it' (QAA, 2009a, p.2). Engaging in the process of PDP helps learners to articulate their learning and achievement more explicitly and supports learning as a lifelong and life-wide activity (QAA, 2009a).

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 and to enhance their knowledge of what they learn and how they learn it.

PDP is:

- Concerned with learning in a holistic sense (in academic, personal and professional contexts)
- Based on reflection and planning skills which are integral to knowing how to learn in different contexts and knowing how to apply learning in different contexts.
- Something that an individual does with guidance and support. Support decreases as personal capability is developed so that the process of PDP becomes self-sustaining.
- Intended to improve the capacity of individuals to communicate their learning to others (for example, academic staff and potential employers).
- A process that involves self-reflection; the creation of personal records; and planning and monitoring progress towards the achievement of personal objectives.

(QAA, 2009a)

The process of PDP involves students reflecting on learning and achievements in their academic, personal, and work life and making plans for their educational, personal and career development. Engaging in the process of PDP enables students to:

- 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 personal goals and evaluate progress towards their achievement;
- Develop a positive attitude to learning throughout life.

What are the requirements for implementing PDP?

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) set out in their Guidelines on Personal Development Planning (PDP), published in 2009, a number of expectations. These are that:

- At the start of a programme, all students should be introduced to the opportunities for PDP.
- Students will be provided with opportunities for PDP at each stage of their programme.
- The rationale for PDP at different stages of a programme will be explained.

Furthermore, each HE Institution is expected to:

- Develop a policy for PDP.
- Determine strategies for its implementation.
- Specify the nature and scope of opportunities for PDP, and the recording and support mechanisms to be adopted.
- Offer PDP to each student across the range of awards it provides.

What are the intended benefits of PDP?

The effective practice of Personal Development Planning can provide a number of benefits to both students and academic tutors.

For students, an effective scheme should enable (or help) them to:

- Reflect critically;
- Become more independent;
- Adopt a more pro-active approach to their academic study, extra-curricular pursuits and career planning;
- Make links and gain a holistic overview of their studies within a modular environment;
- Capitalise on their learning in a variety of contexts.

For academic tutors, an effective scheme should:

- Add value to the learning-teaching experience;
- Help students take greater responsibility for their own learning;

- Facilitate more effective monitoring of student progress;
- Enable tutors to provide more focussed and more effective academic support and guidance;
- Supply a mechanism for recording the tutorial and pastoral support provided to students, for fostering career-related skills, and for writing meaningful employment references;
- Enhance tutors' capacity to demonstrate the quality of the support they are giving to students and provide a means of evidencing at the level of individual students that intended learning is being achieved;
- Where applicable, help to improve the effectiveness of work-based or work-related learning.

In addition to the benefits outlined above, it is assumed that an effective system of PDP would:

- Increase student retention.
- Improve student progression.
- Enhance students' key skills.
- Make students more 'employable'.

What are the characteristics of effective PDP practice?

The characteristics of effective PDP practice are likely to include:

- Integration with mainstream academic pursuits;
- Links to the intended learning objectives and outcomes of programmes;
- Support and endorsement by lecturing staff, underpinned by support from the institution.

Effective practice should also:

- Reflect local customs, practices and circumstances with regard to the format and operation of the scheme;
- Complement good practice inherent in existing activity and practice;
- Build upon existing partnerships between learners and academics.

How does PDP relate to existing practice?

Personal Development Planning (PDP) is a new way of articulating existing principles and practices.

Its introduction will be mainly a matter of making coherent and explicit to all students the presence and the value of established processes that are central to learning in higher education. Academic tutors have always encouraged students to:

- Make progress towards intellectual independence

- Become more self-aware
- Plan for, and take responsibility for, their own development

Academic tutors bring their existing skills to support students in this, providing feedback, challenges and different perspectives to help their students identify possibilities for change.

Many routine academic practices are built upon this in implicit ways. The introduction of PDP will make it explicit that dialogue between tutor and tutee supports not only the student's deepening understanding of their subject, but also the student's growing ability to think critically about their own performance and how to improve it.

This is already made explicit within the curriculum, where modes of study or assessment involve challenging students as individuals to develop a piece of work over time and/or to undertake a process within which progress is reviewed continually. Examples include:

- Formative assessments
- Independent research projects
- Group projects
- Assessed seminar presentations
- Reflective commentaries / logs
- Portfolio-based assessment

2. Integrating PDP Practice in the Curriculum

Why integrate?

The original guidelines developed to support the implementation of the HE Progress File (QAA , 200120) do not make it a requirement that PDP is integrated with the curriculum: only that students are provided with opportunities for PDP and guidance to support the process. The following points have been put forward in support of adopting a more integrated approach:

- *It supports learning:* PDP prepares students for academic study by emphasising learning processes and skills – therefore it should be an integral part of the curriculum.
- *All students can benefit from PDP:* as academic staff we want all of our students to become 'more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners'- Integration ensures they all have this opportunity.
- *It supports core curriculum activities:* PDP can provide an effective means of supporting and integrating other elements of some curricula, such as reflective practice, enquiry-based learning and e-portfolios.

- *A common and coherent student experience*: integration holds out the prospect that all students will have experienced similar opportunities, aiding teaching and student management.
- *More effective use of resources*: an additional optional process will waste scarce resources (human, written, electronic, etc).
- *Preparation for life beyond college*: PDP processes are widely used in ‘professional’ life as part of continuing professional development (CPD), and all students need to be prepared for this as well as for life beyond university.
- *Belief*: integration sends a clear message to all those involved (students and staff) that PDP is valued.
- Furthermore, integrating PDP can help to support aspects of employability such as work experience (structured or unstructured) and volunteering by providing a process that encourages students to make the link between these experiences and their learning and development.

Where to start?

Whatever the drivers for adopting a more integrated approach, there are two key questions that need to be considered:

- What do we need to get out of linking PDP and the curriculum?
- (Perhaps more importantly) what do our students need to get out of linking PDP and the curriculum?

Three strands to what PDP might deliver can be distinguished and can be used to define more precisely the rationale for integration:

Strand 1: PDP is about students’ academic learning.

Strand 2: PDP is about students’ personal development.

Strand 3: PDP is about careers and employability.

3. Strategies for Integrating PDP into the Curriculum

Once the aims of PDP have been identified, the next question is to consider how PDP can be incorporated into the curriculum. This section gives some indication of the broad strategies that have been adopted in integrating PDP into the curriculum. The approaches are not mutually exclusive, and mixed or intermediate modes are possible: the intention here is to give a flavour of possible curriculum models.

In relation to the curriculum, *Atlay* (2006) distinguished five models of curriculum delivery. We have relabelled his original categories here, as follows:

Discrete: where PDP is conceived as additional to, and separate from, the curriculum. Here students tend to be encouraged to engage in PDP, with perhaps some support from tutors, but whether and how they do so is left largely to them.

Linked: where PDP is viewed as being parallel to, but also having explicit links to, the curriculum. These may include personal logs and diaries, or compulsory sessions as part of personal tutoring or skills weeks.

Embedded: where PDP is embedded in specific modules, which provide the main support for PDP; they may also serve to link with material covered in other modules.

Integrated: a whole-curriculum approach where all or most modules involve activities that are aligned with PDP processes. In this model, every module tutor has a responsibility for supporting PDP.

The Discrete Model

The first strategy that can be adopted is to view PDP as an additional and *discrete* part of the student experience. Here students may be provided with opportunities to engage in PDP activities, and encouraged to undertake them, but these activities are optional and additional to the curriculum, and students are left to their own, with minimal support, to decide whether they should engage. The shaded PDP element runs parallel to the curriculum, but there is limited integration between the two (see Fig. 1).

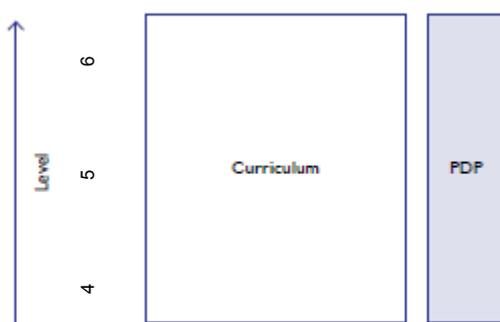


Figure 1: The discrete model

Examples of the application of this model include:

- Programmes with separate 'skills' checklists providing an opportunity for reflection and the gathering of evidence of PDP as student's progress with their studies. The PDP strand here is often similar to an augmented CV, with students providing

evidence of their attainment of the required skills and attributes through linking this to evidence drawn from their studies or other activities.

- Where PDP is provided by the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE) or via an e-portfolio as an optional element with no (or limited) links to the curriculum.

There is no intention to practice this model within the Degree Programmes at the College.

The Linked Model

The second strategy is to run PDP in parallel with the curriculum but linked to it, so that there is an explicit and supported relationship between the two. The linkages may only occur at certain points (related to activities in certain modules) or throughout the course. In this model, the PDP element and the curriculum are distinct (see Fig. 2).

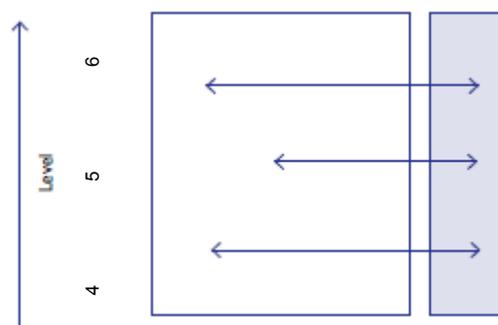


Figure 2: The linked model

Students are given activities as part of the course that emphasise PDP and link to a Progress File or portfolio that may be either an optional or compulsory part of the curriculum. Examples might include diagnostic assessments, reflections on work experience, and personal logs and diaries.

The linked model is practiced within the degree programmes offered by the College as follows:

Induction: The use of *induction* to introduce PDP and portfolios.

Personal Tutoring: Compulsory sessions as part of *personal tutoring* where tutors meet students on a regular basis and help them explore the learning arising from their studies.

Work-based Modules: Modules specifically aimed at *work experience and placement: worked-based project module at level 5*

Zero-weighted Work: An additional but compulsory (zero-weighted) approach in which students must complete a portfolio, but it does not count towards their final award or their degree classification: *Worked-based Portfolio at level 4.*

PDP is strongly embedded in the preparation for placement, work undertaken on placement and reflection post-placement. Staff guide and facilitate this, directly in class time. Staff also visit students on placement and assess reports or portfolios created while on placement.

Before placement, students are encouraged to perform skills audits both to inform them of skill gaps and. These audits are student-driven, but guided by staff.

In the Foundation degree programme, students are placed into specific jobs that match their skill gaps or they may use CVs in competitive applications for industrial placement.

On placement, students assess their progress by continuously review their skills, submitting evidence of improvement in the form of reports or log books to staff, who assess them in order to guide professional development. The future plan is to set up an “electronic portfolio” system for the electronic submission of evidences.

The Embedded Model

The third strategy is to embed PDP in certain modules. These modules provide the main support for PDP and may serve to link with material studied in other modules. They will also link to the student’s Progress File. Such modules may have a skills and/or a subject focus as well as emphasising PDP processes. Such modules within the curriculum tend to be more likely at level 6, with students engaging more independently in PDP at higher levels. A model with such a module at each level is represented in Figure 3. Here the module tutors tend to take primary responsibility for PDP development and support.

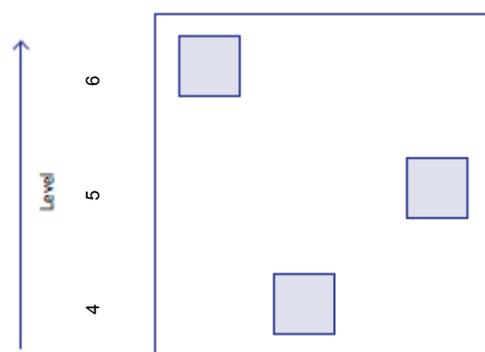


Figure 3: The Embedded model

The embedded model is practiced within the degree programmes offered by the College as follows:

‘Capstone’ modules at at level 6to capture and verify activities.

These include the “**Synoptic Project**” and the “**Final Year Project & Dissertation**” modules at level 6 of the Degree Apprenticeship and the Stand-alone Degree Programmes, respectively.

The “**Work-based Portfolio**” module at level 6 of the Degree Apprenticeship.

Students develop a portfolio (may be called the Employer File), which is linked to the skills modules taught at all three levels. This is monitored at regular intervals, but assessed only at level 6. The File may be shown to future/potential employers as evidence of the skills

students have developed in relation to the communication industry. The files assess the achievement of learning outcomes, which include skills evidencing, reflection and evaluation, and compulsory formative, self-assessment and critical reflection sections completed by the student. At the end of the final year the File includes all previously assessed work if the students wish to showcase it. The File is highly individual, and the student can play to their strengths, making this a successful form of assessment in diverse teaching groups, in keeping with retention and progression targets. The future plan is to implement this through the compulsory e-portfolio evidencing.

The Integrated Model

The fourth strategy can be viewed as a whole-curriculum approach where almost all modules involve activities that are aligned with PDP processes, so that PDP is fully integrated throughout the curriculum (see figure 4). In such a model, reflective approaches underpin the delivery of the curriculum, and the students' progress file or personal development record becomes a record of ALL their curriculum activities.

It is the intention of the College to adopt this module to the degree programmes in near future.

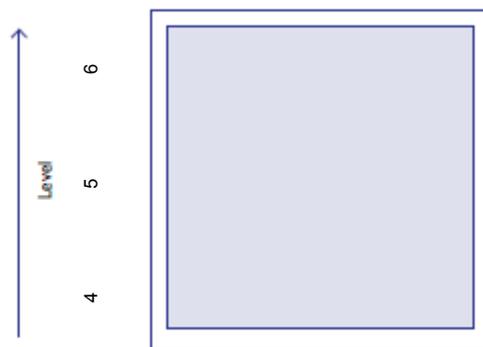


Figure 4: The Integrated model

4. Your Degree in Digital Innovation: Making It Work!

The materials available here are designed to help you:

- Link your work placement and academic study
- Be aware of skills gained through specific study activities, and how they are relevant elsewhere
- Improve planning, problem-solving and presentation skills
- Think actively about your personal and academic development, in relation to your future as a professional in computing
- Record concrete examples you can use in applications for jobs, placements or further study
- Gain experience in applying these skills in different situations, through paid or placement opportunities
- Broaden your career options by providing information, case studies, contacts and resources

Use these resources to help you develop as a professional and access the career you want

5. Personal development planning materials for degree students

Task 1: Charting your progress so far

Task 2: Subject-based Skills: Computing

Task 3: Your work-based learning – seeing its value

Task 4: Project and assignment planning

Task 5: Problem-solving and decision-making

Task 6: Presenting your work and results to others

Task 7: Critical reflection on events

Task 8: Collecting your personal evidence – to demonstrate your strengths and skills

Task 9: Drafting and Refining your CV

Task 10: Researching and evaluating possible career options

Task 11: Listening to the experience of working graduates

Task 12: Gathering inside information on graduate opportunities