



Guide to Curriculum Design : Personal Development Planning

Purpose

This Guide, one of a series produced by the Imaginative Curriculum project, provides an introduction to how curriculum design might be approached in order to support learning through Personal Development Planning.

Audience

The Guide is written primarily for:

- ❑ people who have institutional responsibility for leading PDP
- ❑ people who lead whole course curriculum design and/or who help other academics to develop the curriculum;
- ❑ people who help other academics to develop their knowledge and skills about curriculum design e.g. Tutors for PG Cert HE teaching and learning courses;
- ❑ LTSN Subject Centres who are growing disciplinary knowledge of practice.

Principles for Design

Some institutions have already determined a framework for PDP and this then provides the template for design. In the absence of an institutional template the following principles can be used.

- ❑ With the help of this and other guidance, develop your own interpretation of the meaning of PDP.
- ❑ Review your curriculum (programmes/modules) to identify where examples of learning that underlies PDP already exist.
- ❑ With this map consider whether there are ways in which you might strengthen opportunities for PDP-based learning and to create a more coherent design against the rationale you determine to be important.
- ❑ Involve students in the discursive process and take their views into consideration.
- ❑ Do not be afraid to experiment with different ideas but evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches.

Introduction

The Progress File initiative is a unique teaching and learning project for HE. The policy was developed by the sector, approved

by the Board of Universities UK and the Standing Conference of Principals, and is being promoted through a collaborative process involving Universities UK, SCOP, the Quality Assurance Agency and the Learning and Teaching Support Network.

When implemented 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 this process and HEIs are expected to have their own policies in place by 2005/06.

How is PDP Defined?

PDP 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.*'

- ❑ By *structured* we mean designed and intended.
- ❑ By *supported* we mean that it is valued and facilitated by teachers and other professionals who promote and support student learning.
- ❑ By *process* we mean that, while PDP is based on a simple learning process a strategy for promoting PDP through students' programmes may involve a collection of processes that are connected in some way rather than a single continuous process.
- ❑ By *personal, educational and career development* we are talking about the development of the whole person. PDP is about building self-identity and self-awareness.

The primary objective for PDP is to help students learn more effectively. By this we mean being able to:

- ❑ learn in a wider variety of ways and a wider range of contexts;
- ❑ being able to recognise and evidence own learning and therefore the progress they are making;
- ❑ draw upon and use their expanded personal knowledge to achieve a particular goal;

- ❑ and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning.

PDP is intended to support the development of self-managed learning for a complicated paradoxical world. It is also intended to foster intrinsic motivations to learn and develop and counterbalance the enormous extrinsic motivation of assessment. While not all students will be motivated in this way, it will help show students that self-motivation is valued in higher education learning.

Combining the ideas that PDP is central to improving student learning and their intrinsic motivations, and the support and encouragement we give students to help them learn, it can be viewed as an essential element of a *curriculum for success*.

What are the requirements for PDP?

The policy for PDP has been created to enable HE teachers and HE Institutions determine the way PDP is used and the contexts for use. This was deliberate because the benefits of this type of learning will only accrue if teachers and institutions are able to design opportunities and strategies for learning into their programmes and support and guidance systems in ways that are meaningful to them.

The expectations are that:

- ❑ students will be provided with opportunities for PDP at each stage of their programme
- ❑ at the start of a programme, students will be introduced to the opportunities for PDP
- ❑ the rationale for PDP at different stages of a programme will be explained

How is PDP currently used?

PDP is used in many different ways to support the development, recognition and evidencing of academic and general skills and other learning within and outside the formal curriculum. Some examples are given below.

Academic curriculum

- ❑ academic modules/units;
- ❑ curriculum units that promote non-academic learning like key skills or career management skills;
- ❑ research projects and dissertation work
- ❑ academic tutorials;
- ❑ negotiated areas of the curriculum e.g. assignments, projects and aspects of the assessment process;

- ❑ work related learning, work placement or work experience;
- ❑ problem-based learning;
- ❑ enquiry-led learning;
- ❑ study overseas;
- ❑ aspects of a programme that promote a commitment to continuing professional development.

Support and guidance contexts

- ❑ student induction process;
- ❑ planning programmes and reviewing/discussing progress;
- ❑ integral to pastoral/academic tutorial system;
- ❑ career planning and guidance strategies;

Personal (student determined) 'curriculum'

- ❑ student training initiatives;
- ❑ working as a representative of the student body or Student Union (SU) officer;
- ❑ part-time paid or voluntary work;

The rationale cannot be considered in isolation from the resource and staff development implications of adopting a particular approach. Furthermore, different approaches will achieve different things so a clear understanding about the particular goals. Such goals might emphasise one or more of the following:

- ❑ improving learning in the subject;
- ❑ enhancing knowledge, skills and attitudes that will improve the employability of students and or their social and civic awareness;
- ❑ improving the quality of interactions and staff/student learning in a personal tutor system.

What is decided here will determine how PDP relates to the curriculum.

Approaches to Implementing PDP

From the above there are emerging four basic approaches to PDP which may be connected and combined in composite schemes:

- 1 strategies for learning are located within the academic/pastoral support and guidance (personal tutor) system;
- 2 strategies for learning are located in a series of core curriculum units that focus on the development of general skills for learning (e.g. study skills, key skills, self-management skills, employability and career management skills);
- 3 strategies for learning are integrated into the academic curriculum;
- 4 the use of learning contracts or agreements as a means of helping

students manage their complete portfolio of learning (this is common in work-based learning but it can also be used in mainstream HE learning). Examples of these different approaches can be found in Ward and Jackson (2001).

There are also a number of extra curricula schemes in which students can use PDP to evidence their learning. Three organisations National Union of Students, Student Volunteering UK and the British Council have developed PDP frameworks to support learning through reflection in respectively: Student Union Officer work, Community-based work and Overseas Language Teaching Assistant work. Institutional frameworks for PDP should recognise these frameworks and be aware of the contribution they make to student learning.

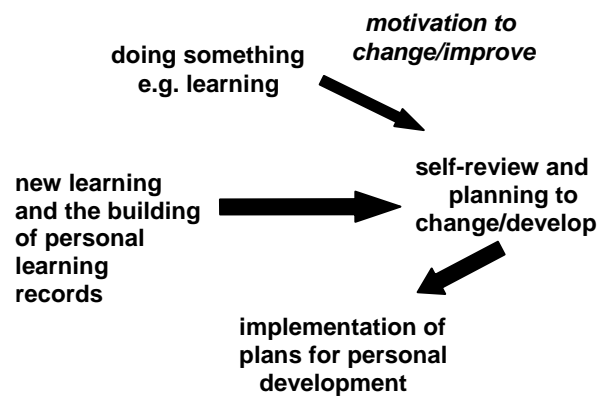
What types of learning is PDP intended to promote?

PDP attempts to connect and draw benefit from reflection (reviewing and evaluating) - recording (self-evidencing of learning)- action planning (specific intentions for doing and learning) and helping students to align their actions to what they think they need to do to develop/improve.

When expressed as a set of actions PDP processes contain a set of interconnected activities namely:

- ❑ **planning** (how to achieve objectives or general change);
- ❑ **doing** (learning through the experience of doing with greater self-awareness);
- ❑ **recording** (thoughts, ideas, experiences, both to understand better and to evidence the process and results of learning);
- ❑ **reviewing** (reflections on what has happened, making sense of it all);
- ❑ **evaluating** (making judgements about self and own work and determining what needs to be done to develop/improve/move on).

The actions and behaviours that underlie PDP provide students and HE teachers with a theory of learning that is similar to the learning spiral proposed by Kolb (1994) and adapted by (Cowan 2002) to show how teachers learn to improve their own practice.



Planning – the capacity to plan for change and then align subsequent actions to personal plans is an essential part of the process. However, life is very complicated and such plans should be seen as guides to be modified and refined rather than checklists that have to be adhered to.

Recording – The extent to which recording is a feature of PDP will vary according to the context. We naturally learn through reflection without recording anything but the discipline of recording helps us understand what we have learnt and provides us with evidence and a personal record of our own development. The requirement to keep records can become the driver for PDP and care must be taken to define the rationale for recording information and how this is integrated into learning processes and facilitative conversations with tutors.

Reflection (Reviewing and Evaluating). - The idea of metacognition or self-awareness. (how did I? why did I? how will I?) is central to the idea of learning in this way. PDP can therefore be thought of as a way of building knowledge about self and through this a stronger sense of self-identity.

The idea of learning through reflection is central to self-awareness. Reflection is an essential component of good student learning and the representation of that learning. Reflection seems to be a part of the kinds of learning in which learners try to understand material that they encounter and to relate it to what they already knew perhaps modifying existing knowledge in the process. The processes encourages a deeper rather than shallow approach to learning. Reflection is also involved in the process of representing learning – when, for example, a learner's

understanding is tested in a format that demands reprocessing of the ideas (e.g. an essay). It is less involved in an approach that requires reiteration of the responses in the same format as the original knowledge.

Reflective learning will already be incidental in the academic activities of most students but deliberate strategies for its use will make students more conscious of it so that it can become an integral part of their approach to learning.

What evidence is there that PDP improves student learning?

PDP processes or activities are normally located within a strategic context eg a programme, a module, personal tutorial, work experience etc.. and an operational context eg a specific task or circumstance that will relate to one or more purposes. All of these activities can result in improved understanding or performance but when they are deliberately connected they can provide a powerful and motivating force for learning and self-improvement.

The idea of improved student learning contains within it:

- ❑ increased capacity to learn in a variety of ways and in a variety of contexts and recognise this;
- ❑ the capacity to recognise and evidence own learning and therefore recognise gains in learning outcomes both tutor defined and personal;
- ❑ improved capacity to draw upon their personal knowledge **and experiences of gaining personal knowledge.**

NEW SECTION TO BE ADDED SEPTEMBER 2002 IN THE LIGHT OF A MAJOR RESEARCH SYNTHESIS ON THIS TOPIC.

PDP and constructive alignment: a core principle of curriculum design

The idea of constructive alignment provides a key principle for curriculum design. It starts with the notion that the learner *constructs* his or her own learning through relevant learning activities. The teachers' job is to create a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes. The key is that all components in the teaching system – the curriculum and its intended outcomes, the teaching methods used, the assessment tasks – are *aligned* to each other. All are tuned to

learning activities addressed in the intended outcomes. The learner finds it difficult to escape without learning. PDP plays an important role in this type of design. It helps the learner to understand how they are constructing their learning and it reinforces the idea that being an effective learning requires actions for learning to be aligned with personal intentions. PDP is a design issue and the initial question for HE teachers and institutions is: how are we going to use PDP to promote students' learning in their programmes and their wider experiences? Underlying this question will be decisions about the rationale for using it in a particular way at a particular time. The key rationale for PDP are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1 Main rationale/contexts for PDP

<p>Support for the learner - this type of scheme is often linked to a personal tutor and wider support and guidance system. The key purpose is to guide and support the learner. The focus is on personal development through self-profiling and identifying learning opportunities within and outside the curriculum to achieve self-development objectives.</p>
<p>Support for learning – this type of scheme is linked to learning within a particular subject/programme context. The intention is to improve the capacity of the individual to manage their own learning by making the learning intentions of the programme/ discipline more explicit and creating opportunities for students to reflect upon and assess their learning.</p>
<p>Support for off-campus but curriculum-related learning- this type of scheme is designed to help students optimise the benefits of off-campus study e.g. year abroad or employment placement through structured learning logs or diaries, and personal development plans and portfolios.</p>
<p>Support for extra-curricula learning- this type of scheme is designed to help students to recognise the opportunities for learning and personal development afforded by activities like part-time work, community service or service as a student representative/SU Officer, through structured self-assessment and personal development plans and portfolios.</p>
<p>Preparation for employment/ professional practice - this type of scheme is designed to support students involved in work placements or work experience or in their preparation for a professional or vocational field to employment. The objective of such schemes is to help students develop a greater appreciation of the skills they are acquiring through work or the discipline that is preparing them for a professional role.</p>

A systematic approach to PDP

PDP is a policy-led initiative and decisions about design have to be made at a number of levels.

Institution

The institution is responsible for determining the overall policy for PDP which is likely to be apart of its Learning and Teaching Strategy. An institution may decide to adopt a consistent approach to PDP across all programmes, for example PDP might be located within a personal tutor system or careers guidance service. Alternatively, the institution might devolve responsibility for determining the approach to PDP to **departments**. In this scenario PDP will develop in a range of ways and students will experience it differently. A third option is to operate a mixed economy.

Programme

At the programme level the primary design issue is to consider the ways in which the student experiences PDP throughout their programme of study. The emphasis is on creating a coherent, manageable and worthwhile experience within the rationale that is adopted for PDP. Design at this level is concerned with the roadmap for PDP. The way PDP is approached will be influenced by the institutional policy and the particular curricula contexts for learning. PDP should support and enhance the educational outcomes for the programme. PDP at this level may also take account of the learning that is valued in the subject as expressed through Subject Benchmark statements many of which contain aspects of the learning that underlies PDP (Jackson, 2001c).

Module

Where PDP is located within the curriculum (rather than a support and guidance system), the module or curriculum unit is the point of operationalisation – where design is translated into teaching and learning activities. Design for learning through PDP is dependent on the knowledge and skills of individual teachers. Factors which will influence design include:

- a) whether the emphasis is on discipline-based learning or more generic learning;
- b) the level at which learning is taking place;
- c) the rationale for learning through PDP;
- d) the particular learning outcomes that PDP supports.

Getting started

Regardless of the approach that is eventually adopted, PDP requires HE teachers to consider how their current designs for learning (programmes and courses) and the curriculum building blocks (modules and units), and support and guidance systems incorporate opportunities for PDP. In any programme there are likely to be examples of the types of learning processes that PDP promotes. The design process therefore begins by interpreting the idea of PDP, reviewing what already exists and making this explicit within the current design. A curriculum map is a useful aid and this can be linked to a programme specification.

Academic tutors have always encouraged students to make progress towards intellectual independence, to become more self-aware, to plan for and take responsibility for their own development. Academic tutors support students in this, providing feedback, challenges and different perspectives to help students identify possibilities for change. PDP provides a vehicle for consolidating such formative feedback to help learning i.e. it can be used strengthen the formative learning process. Many routine academic practices are built upon this in implicit ways. The introduction of Personal Development Planning will make it explicit that dialogue between tutor and tutee supports not only the enhancement of students' deepening understanding of their subject but also the student's growing ability to think critically about his or her own performance and how to improve it.

The basis for PDP in academic contexts 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 might include:

- formative assessments;
- independent research projects;
- group projects;
- assessed seminar presentations;
- reflective commentaries / logs / diaries;
- portfolio based assessment;
- problem-based learning;
- work experience which encourage students to log and review their learning.

Enhancing coherence

This initial curriculum mapping is likely to reveal that the learning processes that underlie PDP are already suffused through the curriculum. The next step is to create greater coherence in the design of your own strategy for promoting learning through PDP by comparing what you are already doing with your interpretation of PDP.

The most likely additional feature that will be required will be tools, guidance and support to enable students to plan their development and record achievement / progress more systematically and encourage learning through the reflective and planning process.

This process of enhancing what you are already doing will result in a more comprehensive rationale for your strategy for supporting learning through PDP.

What are the characteristics of effective PDP practice?

The characteristics of effective PDP practice can help inform design decisions. They are likely to include:

- ❑ integration with mainstream academic pursuits;
- ❑ links to the learning objectives and outcomes of programmes;
- ❑ connections to the broader world of complex learning outside the academic environment;
- ❑ support and endorsement by lecturing staff so that students feel that their efforts are valued;
- ❑ support from the institution for staff to experiment and innovate and time to develop knowledge and skills to support student learning.

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

- ❑ make links and gain a (holistic) overview of their studies within a modular environment
- ❑ reflect critically;
- ❑ become more independent as they progress through their courses;
- ❑ adopt a more pro-active in their academic study, extra-curricular pursuits and career planning;
- ❑ 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;
- ❑ provide 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.

Acknowledgements

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References and Further Reading

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<http://www.recordingachievement.org/>

Website resources

Learning and Teaching Support Network

<http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/projects/pdp>

This site includes a series of Guides for Busy Academics, information about the national coordinating group (Progress File Implementation Group) and information about research into PDP.

Centre for Recording Achievement

<http://www.recordingachievement.org/> The main national resource for PDP-based learning.

Contains a wealth of information and resources including institutional and subject-based case studies.

Quality Assurance Agency

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/>

Progress File Guidelines

See also Subject Centres for information about PDP-related learning in your subject, accessed through <http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/>

Suggested Sections for your consideration

Doing (To be added on Page 3 immediately after Figure The Actions and Behaviours that underlie OPDP)

Learning through the experience of doing enhances self-awareness and self-motivation. In addition, learning by doing contributes to the development and improvement of knowledge, skills and capabilities.

Resources (To be added on Page 6 before the section titled *What are the characteristics of effective PDP practice?*)

For PDP to be effective and efficient, it will require appropriate resources in terms of tools, materials, guidance and support. In higher education institutions (HEIs), there is a varied and diverse range of tools, paper-based and/or electronic that are available for use in planning, implementing, recording and evidencing PDP. (See <http://www.recordingachievement.org>).

In addition, other learning resource and media eg Guides to writing CV and job applications, preparing for interviews, improving academic writing, etc. are invaluable in contributing to the students' learning. Staff guidance and support is also critical in ensuring the success of PDP in an academic context. Staff who support PDP in institutions must be committed to the process and practice, as well as possess the knowledge and skills to effectively support students' learning. A robust continuing professional development programme is a necessity in ensuring the success of an PDP practice.