

Student progress files

What are student progress files?

The [National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education \(The Dearing Report, 1997\)](#) and the Scottish Committee (The Garrick Report, 1997) recommended the introduction of **Student Progress Files** across UK higher education (HE) institutions. Institutional implementation plans were required to be in place by the 2005/06 academic year. The UK is the first country to mandate this approach to learning and in turn Personal Development Planning (PDP) is the first mandated learning approach for the UK (Higher Education Academy, 2004). Similar policy led initiatives such as Records of Achievement and Profiling for secondary education have been in place for many years.

Progress files are intended to:

- Support a more explicit representation of achievements within programmes of study, an aid to students from diverse backgrounds
- Encourage more consistency in the recording of these achievements
- Foster an appreciation of lifelong learning amongst students
- Develop greater self-reflection and action planning skills amongst students to take with them through their programmes of learning, into the workplace and other aspects of their lives
- Add value to the student learning experience

Student progress files consist of the following elements:

A transcript recording student academic achievement, which should follow a common format devised by institutions

A process of personal development planning, which is the means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development, leading to the production of **personal development records**.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has produced a useful [leaflet for students](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/students/guides/understandprogfiles.asp) (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/students/guides/understandprogfiles.asp>).

Progress files contain both personal and academic records, sometimes abbreviated as PARs. Progress files may serve a number of purposes and potential audiences, including:

- the student
- other HEIs who wish to verify achievements (for transfer, for APL, for subsequent awards)
- prospective employers
- financial sponsors

Types of progress files

HEIs may develop their own structures, systems and materials but these must lie within the recommendations of the QAA's [Policy Statement on a Progress File for Higher Education](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressfiles/guidelines/policystatement/default.asp). (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressfiles/guidelines/policystatement/default.asp>)

There is a wide variety of practice in the systems that have and are being developed, including approaches to Personal Development Planning or Plans (PDP). These are in part informed by the contextual use, for example whether PDP is based on principles of directed/prescriptive learning (linked to specific programme outcomes) or self-directed/negotiated/emergent learning linked to broader self-development.

Models of individual learning styles, particularly the work of Kolb, interface with PDP approaches. In addition the implementation model will impact on students' experiences of PDP, for example whether an embedded or integrated approach (linked to existing modules/assessment) is used or additional curriculum models (discrete modules/separate assessment) (Jackson & Ward, 2004).

Some institutions have adopted a 'top down' approach with institutional-wide systems whilst others have left more flexibility at school or departmental level.

Whilst PDP is seen as an opportunity for students to reflect upon their own progress and achievements, different approaches to PDP result may bring differing emphases to the records that are produced. Many features of PDP and Progress Files will be familiar and in use already by social work education providers and many social policy programmes, for example linked to placement learning, student retention as part of widening participation and key skills. Stages commonly associated with PDP and similar activities are:

- Reflection
- Planning
- Doing
- Recording
- Reviewing
- Evaluating

PDP is commonly associated with:	It may lead to improvements in:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning logs/journals/diaries • Reflective practice • Self-assessment/evaluation • Goal setting • Cooperative learning • Action planning <p>(Gough et al, 2003)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • course grades • skills: study, practical, cognitive • knowledge • self-esteem • self-awareness • clearer career direction

PDP implementation

Some top tips for PDP implementation	
1.	Don't reinvent the wheel - find out about and build on existing approaches
2.	Then pick out the bits that suit your programmes/students/institution
3.	Focus on process not product
4.	Make your strategy and targets achievable
5.	Connect with other 'drivers' e.g. internal reviews and audit

6.	Find institutional support at the highest level
7.	Use staff and student as champions
8.	Don't expect to win everyone over at once
9.	Be prepared to face cynics
10.	Network with colleagues in other institutions
<p><i>Thanks to Sue Bloy and Louise Buckingham, De Montfort University and Megan Lawton and Micelle McGuirk, University of Wolverhampton, for sharing their 10 top tips at the Engaging students with Personal Development Planning Conference, University College Worcester 26th January 2005</i></p>	

Check List for Implementation of PDP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At what stage of implementation are you? • What are your institutional/external drivers? • Where do you need to be and by when? • How will you get there? • What support do you need? • What risk factors do you face? • What opportunities do you have? <p><i>Adapted from a handout distributed at the Engaging students with Personal Development Planning Conference, University College Worcester 26th January 2005</i></p>

Exemplars

There are many different examples of models and systems for PDP. The [HEFCE Strategy for e-Learning](#) (2005) encourages e-based systems to support PDP. The examples provided here are illustrative and chosen because they are supported by helpful explanatory online information.

Generic exemplars

University of Liverpool	Personal Development (PD) Tutorial Programme
University of Wolverhampton	Pebblepad System
Nottingham Trent University	Personal Development Planner produced as part of The Keynote Project by Nottingham Trent University, The London Institute and The University of Leeds
University of Liverpool	LUSID system and Personal Tutorials
University of	FDTL4 ePortfolios Project

Newcastle School of Medical Educational Development	
University of Northumbria	EPICS

Subject related exemplars

University of Staffordshire, Institute of Social Work and Applied Social Studies	Professional Development Profiles for BA Social Work: Certificate level (.doc file) Intermediate level (.doc file) Staffordshire University e-portfolio system
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Key sources of information and guidance

There is a great deal of detailed and up to date generic information and guidance available to support PDP implementation. Links are provided to organisations key to supporting HE in matters related to PDP and Student Progress Files.

The [Centre for Recording Achievement](#) (CRA) is an associate centre of the Higher Education Academy. It is a national network organisation and a registered educational charity and should be seen as the first stop for those looking for information on PDP. The aim of the Centre is to promote good practice in Recording Achievement and Personal Development Planning, which includes the development of an evidence base to refine both theoretical understanding and the practical application of Recording Achievement processes.

[The Centre for Recording and Achievement Case Study Database](#) - The CRA has a searchable database of case studies on recording achievement for personal or academic development.

There are several CETLs that are related to PDP:

- [Centre for Excellence in Professional Learning from the Workplace \(CEPLW\)](#)
- [Bridges CETL](#)
- [Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education](#)
- [Foundation Direct CETL](#)
- [PADSHE Project](#)
- [Enabling Achievement within a Diverse Student Body](#)
- [Creative Learning in Practice CETL](#)

References and resources

DfEE/UK Lifelong Learning (1998) [Higher Education for the 21st Century Response to the Dearing Report](#). <http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/dearing/>

Gough D.A., Kiwan D., Sutcliffe K., Simpson D. & Houghton N. (2003). [A systematic map and synthesis review of the effectiveness of personal development planning for improving student](#)

[learning](#). London: EPPICentre, Social Science Research Unit.
http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWebContent/reel/review_groups/EPPI/LTSN/LTSN_June03.pdf

HEFCE strategy for e-learning (2005) http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_12/

Jackson, N. & Ward, R. (2004) [A fresh perspective on progress files-a way of representing complex learning and achievement in higher education](#). *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* Vol. 29, No. 4, August 2004.
http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record§ion=generic&id=361

The Higher Education Academy, www.heacademy.ac.uk
The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997) (aka 'The Dearing Report')
[Higher Education in the Learning Society: Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education](#). London: HMSO.
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/>

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), Getting the job you deserve, progress files for students leaflet,
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/students/guides/understandprogfiles.asp>

The Scottish Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997) [Report of the Scottish Committee](#) (aka 'The Garrick Report') <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/scottish.htm>

The Scottish Office (1998) *Higher Education for the 21st Century: Response to the Garrick Report*. London: HMSO.