

# A Policy for the Implementation of Personal Development Planning (PDP) at the University of Glasgow 2007-2010

At its meeting on 7 February 2008 Senate approved a Personal Development Planning (PDP) Policy for implementation by the end of academic session 2007-08 and an associated [Action Plan](#) for 2007-08. The Policy is detailed below.

**Please note:** Subsequent to Senate approval of the PDP Policy and Action Plan, Mahara superseded MyStuff as the University's supported e-PDP tool.

## Executive Summary

The University of Glasgow adopts the following definition of 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.<sup>1</sup>

### *Strategic significance*

The success of our graduates enhances both the University's reputation and its competitiveness, nationally and internationally. PDP is a process that will develop the generic skill of reflective practice in our students, and in so doing will cultivate their independence, motivation, confidence, self-awareness and development of academic skills as independent and critical thinkers. This is an important element of the University's learning and teaching enhancement agenda, focusing, as it does, on interventions and opportunities that strengthen graduate attributes.

### *Significance in promoting employability*

We are committed to enhancing the employability of our students. The implementation of PDP is one of the actions identified to further that aim and forms part of the Employability Strategy.

### *Benefits to students*

The implementation of PDP will benefit students. PDP will provide a framework to help students:

- Make sense of the experiences available to them at Glasgow University and how they relate to personal, educational or career-related goals.
- Learn more about the variety of development opportunities on offer.
- Summarise their student experience, reflect on, record and recognise 'critical' events and gather evidence of achievements and skills that are essential for academic performance, CV and career development.
- Develop the skills necessary for success both at University and beyond.
- Become more responsible for their own learning and development, with student ownership of the process and documentation.

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<sup>1</sup> QAA (2001) Guidelines for HE Progress Files. Available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/guidelines/progfile2001.asp> Last accessed 30/10/07.

- Engage with their learning process, foster a sense of community between staff and students and contribute to a more positive learning experience.

By ensuring that students are supported in reflecting on their learning experiences, achievements and areas for development at key stages during their time at Glasgow, students are more likely to make informed decisions about their learning and future.

## 1. Introduction

This paper outlines a policy for the implementation of Personal Development Planning (PDP) for all students at the University of Glasgow by the end of the 2007/08 academic session. It provides a definition of the PDP process, explains why it is important and relevant to learning and teaching at the University of Glasgow and outlines the key principles for implementation.

The Student Representative Council (SRC) want all students to have the opportunity to engage in meaningful and relevant PDP and are fully engaged in the development of this policy.<sup>2</sup>

The policy offers flexibility of approach within an institutional framework, rather than a one-size-fits-all model, in recognition of the different learning styles, support structures and resources available to, and within, the Faculties.

The policy recognises that elements of PDP have been implemented in some subject disciplines already, while in others development work is underway. Some of this has been developed as part of a Faculty/Department's work with PDP in the context of employability. However, in some subject disciplines work has yet to commence. For this reason, in 2007/08, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Strategic Funding for Employability is being used to address these gaps and help consolidate development.

The policy was developed by the PDP Working Group<sup>3</sup>, convened by Debra MacFarlane, Employability Development Adviser.

## 2. What is PDP?

The introduction of PDP was recommended to Higher Education as a result of the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997<sup>4</sup> and in Scotland Garrick, 1997<sup>5</sup>) who recommended that students should have a progress file consisting of their academic transcript and a personal development plan. The University of Glasgow adopts the following definition of personal development planning as:

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<sup>2</sup> See SRC PDP Working Group Paper by Mhairi Wilson, SRC VP (Learning & Development 2006-7). Learning and Teaching Committee Papers, March 2007. Available at

<http://committees.gla.ac.uk/senate/LTC/Agenda/20070314.htm> Last accessed 25/09/07.

<sup>3</sup> Debra Macfarlane (Convener), Dr. Rob Aitken, Prof. Chris Berry, Dr. Phil Cotton, Dr. James Currall, Mary Goodman, Dr. Vicky Gunn, Tom Guthrie, Gavin Lee, Jane McAllister (Clerk), Dr. Kate McLoughlin, Prof. Catherine Steele, Dr. Arthur Whittaker. The document was originally prepared by Debra Macfarlane, Lorna McEachan and Jane Weir.

<sup>4</sup> Dearing, R. (1997). Higher Education in the Learning Society. Report of the National Committee, the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education. HMSO Norwich. Available at

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/> Last accessed 25/09/07.

<sup>5</sup> Garrick, R. (1997) Higher Education in the Learning Society. Report of the Scottish Committee, the national Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education. HMSO Norwich. Available at

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/> Last accessed 25/09/07.

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.<sup>6</sup>

As a guideline, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) recommended that all institutions should have a policy in place for the implementation of PDP.

The primary objective for the introduction of PDP at Glasgow University is to improve the capacity of our students to understand what and how they are learning, and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning.

Our policy is based on guidance from the Centre for Recording Achievement and builds on the Effective Learner Framework (ELF) produced by QAA Scotland<sup>7</sup> that attempts to frame PDP in relation to effective learning so that it is not treated as a separate activity.

### **3. Why is PDP important and relevant to learning and teaching at the University of Glasgow?**

#### *3.1 Strategic significance*

The success of our graduates enhances both the University's reputation and its competitiveness, nationally and internationally. PDP is a process that will develop the generic skill of reflective practice in our students, and in so doing will cultivate their independence, motivation, confidence, self-awareness and development of academic skills as independent and critical thinkers. This is an important element of the University's learning and teaching enhancement agenda, focusing, as it does, on interventions and opportunities that strengthen graduate attributes.<sup>8</sup>

PDP requires support from staff to promote explicitly the development of these attributes in our students, and through the development of students' reflective skills, offers us the opportunity to enhance student retention, a key priority of the Learning and Teaching strategy.

PDP also has wider strategic significance within the sector and is likely to impact on our competitiveness through measures such as Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR), the National Student Survey (NSS), International Student Barometer and league tables in general.

#### *3.2 Significance in promoting employability*

We are committed to enhancing the employability of our students. The implementation of PDP is one of the actions identified to further that aim and, as such, will form part of the Employability Strategy<sup>9</sup> and will feed into the forthcoming review of the Employability Strategy in 2007-08.

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<sup>6</sup> QAA (2001) Guidelines for HE Progress Files. Available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/guidelines/progfile2001.asp> Last accessed 30/10/07.

<sup>7</sup> QAA (2006) Using focused learner questions in personal development planning to support effective learning, Gloucester and QAA (2007) Employability: Effective Learning and Employability, Gloucester.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/themes/ResearchTeaching/attributes.asp> 30/10/07.

<sup>9</sup> University of Glasgow Employability Strategy. <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/careers/employstat.doc> Last accessed 25/09/07.

### 3.3 *Benefits to students*

The implementation of PDP will benefit students. PDP will provide a framework to help students:

- Make sense of the experiences available to them at Glasgow University and how they relate to personal, educational or career-related goals.
- Learn more about the variety of development opportunities on offer.
- Summarise their student experience, reflect on, record and recognise 'critical' events and gather evidence of achievements and skills that are essential for academic performance, CV and career development.
- Develop the skills necessary for success both at University and beyond.
- Become more responsible for their own learning and development, with student ownership of the process and documentation.
- Engage with their learning process, foster a sense of community between staff and students and contribute to a more positive learning experience.

By ensuring that students are supported in reflecting on their learning experiences, achievements and areas for development at key stages during their time at Glasgow, students are more likely to make informed decisions about their learning and future.

## 4. **Principles for PDP at the University of Glasgow**

The following are guiding principles for the implementation of PDP:

1. All students should be given opportunities to undertake a variety of PDP activities throughout their period of study at the University of Glasgow. Students will be responsible for their own engagement with PDP as part of their learning experience.
2. It will be compulsory for faculties to offer structured and supported PDP to students. Students will participate in PDP on a voluntary basis unless degree or course accreditation stipulates that a particular PDP programme is undertaken. In this case, students will be required to fulfil the requirements of the course/programme without precluding their involvement in wider Faculty and University-wide PDP opportunities.
3. Students should be provided with opportunities to have feedback on their engagement with PDP. Faculties, University Services and the SRC will be responsible for providing dedicated support.
4. Students should be made aware of opportunities and support available at Faculty-level inductions in their first year and thereafter throughout their studies, up to and including post-graduate level.
5. All students will be given the opportunity to record their PDP on-line.
6. Students will be responsible for their own PDP records, both electronic and paper-based, and he/she will determine who is given access to them.
7. Staff will receive support in identifying, implementing and evaluating PDP opportunities for their students, as appropriate to the programmes in which the students are participating.

## 5. How does PDP relate to existing practice?

Many academic practices are built upon PDP in implicit ways. The introduction of PDP makes it explicit that the dialogue between a student and his/her tutor/adviser supports not only students' deepening understanding of their subjects, but also the students' 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 regularly. Examples include: formative assessments; independent research projects, including doctoral theses; group projects; assessed seminar presentations; reflective commentaries/logs; reflections on placements and portfolio based assessment.

Furthermore, professional development aspects of some degrees may overlap with, but are not coterminous with the University of Glasgow's definition of PDP that includes personal, educational and career development. Where courses/programmes involve professional development requirements, students will have the opportunity to reflect on the completion of these as part of the wider PDP process.

## 6. Additional activities needed to support successful policy implementation.

These are likely to vary from department to department. From the point of view of recording students' development and achievement, the following will be important:

- A clearly defined PDP process and programme of activity in all faculties that ensures that all students have the opportunity to engage in the PDP process.
- A clear review process both centrally and in each faculty to determine progress towards achieving the principles.
- Ongoing review and evaluation of the way that transcripts are used to record PDP activities, especially in the light of development of the Student Records System.
- Ensuring that PDP policy is in alignment with and promoted through the Employability Strategy Review Group.

It is also important to outline the way in which Moodle, MyStuff and websites work together in regard to PDP. The following guideline is suggested.

- *Moodle* – for activity-based material that can make use of the rich range of tools in Moodle. This is particularly relevant to material generated at the course level (rather than programme or higher levels) e.g. course led questionnaires, discussion fora etc.
- *Websites* – for information about PDP and material that students should read e.g. outlines of PDP and its purpose and about opportunities available throughout the University e.g. through the Careers Service, the Student Learning Service, the SRC etc.
- *MyStuff* – to be used as a repository to store material for the longer term and for activities that transcend individual courses e.g. examples of work, reflection across a number of areas – academic, extra-curricular, work etc.

Access to MyStuff will be available as an option to all students. This will enable students studying in multiple departments or faculties, or faculties who may already use other online recording tools for aspects of professional practice, an optional method for recording PDP activity that is able to span their studies and extra-curricular activity.

## **7. Monitoring and Review of PDP implementation**

In the short-term, student and staff surveys will be used to evaluate the benefits of the PDP opportunities developed and to revise and improve on them for subsequent years.

MyStuff as a tool for recording PDP activity will be evaluated as detailed in the implementation plan.

In the longer term, PDP provision and quality will be reviewed through, for example, the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) and Quality Enhancement processes, departmental review, evaluation of the use of SFC Funding for employability (2007-2011), ELIR and through ongoing monitoring and evaluation undertaken by the Employability Development Adviser.