

# PDP INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

## REPORT



### **From PDP to Graduate Attributes**

University of Central Lancashire

The aim of the project is to enhance the student experience through *greater provision for skills development*. This will not be a new concept for any of us working in this area, and we have probably all faced the same challenges of a singular focus by many staff on the delivery of 'content', combined with a lack of expertise in undertaking personal reflection. However, there is a growing awareness at the level of curriculum design of the importance of skills development, and a series of collective activities are taking us forward in the endeavour to have subject knowledge and skills is.

Key elements forming the background to the UCLAN project have been:

- a. an institutional audit of academic skills, which identified where gaps were apparent
- b. an academic audit of PDP, which identified weaknesses in provision
- c. results from the NTSF-NARN project which identified the willingness of students to engage in PDP and reflective ability, and their capacity to do so
- d. a renewed focus at institutional level on 'employability'
- e. the creation of a new post of 'personal adviser' for new (2012) first year students

these elements have provided a platform from which to argue for continued attention to the development of skills (in the widest sense of the word) in the curriculum. We are pursuing a twin-track approach: at institutional level a graduate attributes model has been consulted upon, and is undergoing further refinement; at school level, engagement with staff through assessment workshops is allowing discussion of curriculum design to take place.

### **Progress**

Wide consultation leading to the creation of a 'graduate attributes' model. It is being proposed that these graduate attributes are primarily used in a manner envisaged by Barnett, with a focus on the individual, one which marries with the values and practices: *defining a style of behaviour with each other, both as teams and individuals.*

An increase in numbers of staff completing the dialogue route to SD2, from 50 when the project began to now over 100. At the same time, another cohort of staff have completed the PGCert (learning and teaching in Higher Education). This is a significant increase in the numbers of staff who are familiar with the concept of reflective practice.

At a school level, members of the team have been delivering a workshop on Feedback and Assessment, which has started the process of staff examining the type of assessment they are setting, and specifically how assessment supports learning. The concept of assessment FOR learning rather than OF learning is being developed, and will allow for further workshops to explore how assessment supports the development of graduate attributes.

The appointment of a team of 30 personal advisers, whose role is to support students with their transition to H.E., and to help them to identify and develop their academic, personal and employability skills. The PI of the CRA project is closely involved with the personal advisers, and they have been introduced to the graduate attributes model as a conceptual framework for their discussions with students.

Examples of where we envisage that graduate attributes may be practically drawn upon include:

- as an aspirational model, located in course handbooks
- discussions between student and tutor regarding employability essentials
- discussions between student and personal adviser about personal and academic development
- completing module descriptors by staff, where the terms set out in the descriptor of the model can be directly incorporated to articulate the skills and competencies which different learning activities will develop
- *For the future, they provide the basis for extensive curriculum review and refocus, as carried out at Aberdeen, and as recommended for their institutions by a large multi-disciplinary project team at King's - Warwick.*