PDP NEWSLETTER: WELSH EDITION   ISSUE 2

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IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL

ROB WARD, CRA DIRECTOR

Welcome to the second edition of the PDP Welsh Supplement, produced by the Centre for Recording Achievement with support from the Higher Education Academy.

Our focus this time is very much upon practice; whether embedded within the curriculum as 'PDP in disguise' in Biosciences at Cardiff, or in assessment activities - the work of Mike Reddy in engaging students directly in the examination process, and of Rob East in relation to self-assessment in Law. Such approaches have clear potential in terms of supporting 'students as partners' – an important alternative to 'students as customers' . Moving beyond the curriculum, we find PDP processes supporting practice within extra-curricular awards at institutional level (at Swansea, using Pebblepad) and nationally, via GOWales and City and Guilds accreditation. From these last two, key points which stood out from me were Chris Cardew's comment that *'Have(ing) the confidence to do something unique … can make a difference to each student'* alongside the comments from Julija Yaroshevska that *'the Award was a great opportunity to realistically evaluate the knowledge and skills gained during the work experience and to identify areas for further development and improvement. In a way, the Award was a formal recognition of all the efforts and contribution made towards achieving set goals and objectives during the placement.'*

Hopefully, important points will stand out for you too! And if we can help our students develop a stronger appreciation of themselves and their own development it can only serve them well in future learning - and the graduate employment market.

We hope you enjoy reading this supplement and if anyone is interested in contributing to a future issue, then please contact Cath Hewson at cath@recordingachievement.org

PDP in disguise

Dr Beatrix Fahnert, Cardiff School of Biosciences, Cardiff University.

Student engagement with Personal Development Planning (PDP) had been low for years, but enhancing uptake by summatively assessing PDP does not support developing the relevant practice and skills. In 2010 Cardiff School of Biosciences took the route of embedding PDP in all courses by means of the Competencies Development Scheme (CPS). We aim to graduate employable students with a clearly defined range of subject-specific and transferable skills at an acceptable competence level, developed with appropriate progression during the degree, and starting a life-long reflective practice leading into Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The eventual "Record of Competency Training" can be shown to a prospective employer.

There is no general agreement what graduate attributes are (Dunne *et al.*, 2000; Harvey, 2000), but Lowden *et al.* (2011) emphasised core transferable skills included in the CPS among others as follows:

Level Four	Level Five	Level Six
▪ Numeracy ▪ Literacy ▪ Referencing ▪ Summary writing ▪ Group work ▪ Peer-assessment ▪ Reflection ▪ Gaining a job	• Laboratory numeracy • Health and safety • Abstract writing • Integrating information • Constructing logical arguments • Assessing data critically • Group work • Peer-assessment • Reflection • Employability	▪ Self-assessment/ management ▪ Reflection ▪ Risk Assessment

Some CPS components are embedded in core modules. A searchable database of relevant transferable and practical skills aids planning and module choice, and allows retrieving a record at any point in time. CPS is mostly run outside modules and supported by the Personal Tutor (providing feedback and general advice) throughout the duration of studies, and in Level Six also by the Research Project Supervisor. CPS activities (tutorials, seminars, diagnostic tests, reflection) require and encourage a high level of student engagement.

CPS output enhances other learning and teaching activities as well as providing feedback to students and pastoral care. This cross-referencing (and the eventual transcript) is managed via a database, where achievements are recorded.

Self-monitoring and reflection allows students to assess their development of core and additional competencies, to plan further action, and to record evidence using ePortfolios and the issued logbook. The logbook includes aims and an overview of the CPS, explains how/when to attempt everything, and how students are supported. It had to be emphasised that a diagnostic test is not an exam but a snapshot of development (i.e. last minute preparation is unhelpful), and the competence level is not a pass mark (i.e. 40% is unsatisfactory).

A matrix prompts recording (competency, date, mark/level, received feedback, strengths/ weaknesses, future action) and reflection. Staff receive the logbook for information as well as further instructions and staff support material.

Reflective of Level Six learning, students need to be proactive in seeking information and support in order to prepare the transition of PDP into CPD. The process is initially aided by a proforma helping students identify any remaining training needs

(based on previous diagnoses, feedback, marks, academic progress review), which are then discussed with their Research Project Supervisor. CPS also feeds into general career advice and finding work placements supported by the Employability Advisor and Career Liaison Officer.

The self-directed approach to learning and mainly formative nature of work required a cultural change. Students strategically prioritised summative coursework. Meanwhile we can see both improved uptake and achievement. Such a structured and tangible system of learning and teaching activities for developing competencies, of assessing the level of achievement, and all being linked to bespoke pastoral and academic advice, allows for supporting students optimally in their development. It is PDP in disguise.

Dunne, E., Bennet, N. and Carré, C,. 2000. Skill development in higher education and employment. In: Coffield, F., ed., Differing visions of a Learning Society: Research findings. Volume 1. The Policy Press & ESRC, Bristol, 105 -138

Harvey, L., 2000. New realities: the relationship between higher education and employment. *Tertiary Education and Management* 6, 3-17

Lowden, K., Hall, S., Elliot, D. and Lewin, J., 2011. Employers' perceptions of the employability skills of new graduates. Edge Foundation.

Participatory design in peer-negotiated assessment: To thine own self (set exam) be true.

Dr. Mike Reddy FRSA, University of Wales, Newport

Why on Earth did you?

Several years ago, I was in the unenviable position of being forced to set an exam for a module 'owned' by another school. Although the content was to develop vocational skills - something that was assessed exclusively by portfolio work within my own Department - the course being supported had few other examinable components. So, the necessity of showing variety in assessment fell on this Computer Graphics class. To exacerbate the situation, the school in question scheduled the exam six months after the teaching period ended, with the first semester course assessment planned at the end of the academic year. Goodwill was critical for participatory design at a time of understandably high levels of stress over the impact on final degree classification. Therefore, a novel approach was justified to mitigate students' lack of previous examination experience, by focussing on explicit involvement in the assessment development process. In short, they set their own examination.

How on Earth did you?

The three final year students took part in tutorials, discussing previous examinations, the curriculum and personal interests. One lecturer-set question drew upon peer-negotiated mini-projects, to assess business applications of animation. Student-set questions were filtered to ensure theoretical underpinnings and appropriate curriculum coverage, but at least one from each student was selected for the final exam. After questions were edited for language I developed a marking scheme and model answers for approval by the usual external examination process; in effect I sat the students' exam.

External comments on the need for deeper understanding, rather than mere regurgitation, were fed back to the students.

The examination was set as an open book, seen paper to motivate students to engage in detailed investigation of the deeper theoretical aspects of the course in their revision.

It must be remembered that they were being asked to set the assessment many months after attendance at lecturers had ceased. Such open and transparent assessment is regularly performed by the Open University, at which I was an external examiner at the time in the Faculty of Technology. Cross-marking and the usual external examiner moderation was performed in line with usual university policy, with all scripts and assignments were double marked.

Well I won't be doing that again.

Despite widespread condemnation in some sections of the Media at the time, when the Times Higher covered the story under the banner of debating "assessment for learning", I still stand by the positive experience students felt as a direct response to being involved in the examination process, despite them having little previous experience of actively participating in, rather than being passive victims of this mode of assessment. Supported preparation focused on explicit study skills, which the students reported were of benefit to them in other modules being assessed by traditional means.

Exam results when compared to expected performance, based on observations and previous written assignments. One student performed better in the exam, than in coursework, but it is not statistically significant. The other two achieved results at the 50-55 percentiles, and subsequently engaged in active discussions of the manner of marking, especially when the Media coverage, while generally positive in the quality newspapers, was negative in other publications, may also have been a factor.

These students were concerned because, having been allowed to prepare advance notes, there had been an expectation on their part of higher grades. However, both were satisfied, once the reasons for their grades were provided. The approach, therefore, was much more time consuming and intensive than traditional examinations, but the cross-curricular benefits would suggest that this would be a useful, addition to any HE student experience.

Student self assessment of class performance in law

Rob East, University of Glamorgan.

Our focus here is in a first year module on a law undergraduate programme with over 100 students annually. The module adopts a student centred approach in the way that is delivered, which aims at students developing important skills. These include working in groups, preparation work, undertaking research, analysing & evaluating and verbal communication.

Students assess their performance in the classroom throughout the academic year e.g. the effectiveness of their contributions to class discussion, this constituting 40% of the total assessment for the module. There are two other elements of assessment – an individual essay (20%) and a team exercise (40%). In a new development, it also specifically focuses on encouraging the development of information literacy skills which, with the large amount of information available to students on the internet, is of great contemporary importance. Information literacy is defined by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) as follows:

'Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner.'
http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/advocacy/learning/information-literacy/Pages/definition.aspx

Such information literacy skills, therefore, include recognising what information is relevant to undertake a task (e.g. drafting an answer to a problem question or doing a class presentation), how to find such information and how to communicate it appropriately.

A major reason for assessing class performance is to formally encourage the development of the skills appropriate to these activities. This process involves self-assessment, whereby each student is required to provide a mark which s/he thinks reflects his/her performance. To guard against 'grade inflation', the tutor also provides a mark. As long as the two marks are within some agreed parameters e.g. 5% or 10%, the student's mark prevails, otherwise the tutor's mark is substituted.

To assist students in this process, an interim self assessment takes place approximately half way through the module. This constitutes a 'dry run' which provides feedback that students can use to improve or develop their class contribution as well as assisting in developing the expertise to be able to provide the final assessment mark of class performance at the end of the module. This self assessment requires each student to engage in *personal development planning* (PDP) whereby they are required to reflect on their performance in class, assessing it against the following set of criteria:

1. Attendance at, and preparation for, class
2. Quality of information provided in class
3. Quality of communication of information Is the student audible, clear, structured and precise in his/her contributions?
4. Attitude to the views of others

Does the student allow others to c tribute to discussion and listen to what they have to say? To what extendoes s/he attempt to encourage others t participate in discussions?
5. Ability to deal with oral questions
6. Ability to analyse and critically evaluate material
7. Ability to respond positively to conflicting viewpoints

As part of our PDP strategy, this assessment seeks to encourage each student to reflect upon the skills necessary to be an effective learner. This is intended to lead to the student obtaining a clearer idea of the features of effective learning and thereby increase their understanding of the subject matter that is being studied.

Reflection

This approach provides a framework for the development of important study skills that are built up through preparation for, and performance in, class. It rewards those who engage in this process but it does require the maintenance of accurate registers of attendance. The use of self assessment, based upon critical self reflection of performance, aims to give ownership of the assessment process to students, thereby allowing them to gain a valuable learning experience. This type of assessment also counters concerns about plagiarism.

While one problem with the process is that students who miss classes due to illness or other legitimate reasons can be penalised, the overall benefits of this assessment are seen as outweighing such a disavantage.

Developing and Implementing an Online Employability Award at Swansea

Chris Cardew, Careers and Employability, Swansea University.

The context

Employability skills and awareness are vital for our students; more vital is that they recognise these in themselves and can articulate experiences using skills to an employer. The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) showed Swansea in a poor light in relation to employability with some subjects having very low employability statistics. There was concern that prospective student numbers might drop. There was also an increasing sense of responsibility towards the students regarding their employability and not just on academic experience alone.

At Swansea an Employability Skills Award (ESA) was piloted two years ago with some success. The ESA had three themes with a Careers Adviser taking responsibility for one employability theme each. The programme was designed to be mainly class taught using a PebblePad webfolio for students to compile work for assessment. This worked well, but the numbers of students who could attend was limited to around 90.

Following this pilot it was decided to create an award for all students to participate in during their time at university. The award needed to be student driven to be completed by an individual in their own time

This Award (now the Swansea Employability Award - SEA) is now fully online, being launched in time for the new academic year 2011/12. The target was for 200 students to register within the year.

By Feb 20, 2013, 279 students had registered, with 10 already having completed. The university marketing team were keen to have case studies early on and as a result interviewed the first two who completed the award: http://bit.ly/pb201201.

There are two main modules following registration. The first module involves finding out more about yourself: what you value in life, your personality type, your learning styles, what jobs might suit you; and then marketing yourself by creating a CV and covering letter. The module finishes with an interview with a Careers Adviser.

The second module is about gaining experiences. These experiences may follow on from the first module and can include work experiences, volunteering, positions of responsibility, and so on. The second module finishes with a mock job interview.
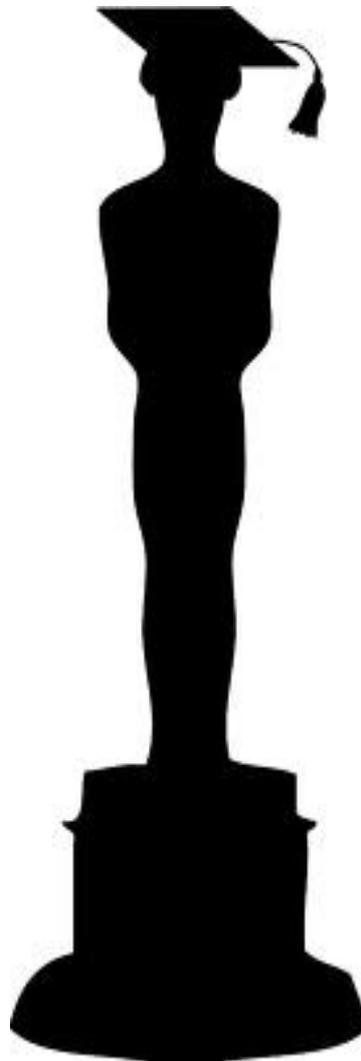
To maintain the philosophy of the SEA which is to keep it open to any student, over 40 interviewers were recruited from staff across campus. These are people who are trained and experienced in interviewing in their particular field who have offered their services to the SEA to be mock job interviewers. The mock interview is at the end of the SEA and is driven by the student who books an interview when they are ready and the interviewer allocated for that day will interview them. The interviews are generic, i.e. not job specific, so there is no need to collect information about the student or to get them to apply for a fictitious job vacancy.

The questions are geared strongly towards skills used and developed during interviews as this is a key area that employers say is missing when they interview graduates.

By taking part in the award students are required to reflect on experiences they have had, and on the skills they have learnt and developed. They participate in a careers interview and a mock job interview respectively, and then reflect on what they have learnt in each and identify further actions they need to take. For each element of the two modules participants need to record their experiences and thoughts in relation to their career. PebblePad forms are used to scaffold this reflection and these are saved to a gateway for Personal Tutors (PTs) to access when necessary. The PTs are then asked to verify that the student did have the experiences that they reflected upon. The philosophy behind this is not that we don't trust the students, but that we feel that it will encourage PTs to spend more time with their students and also act as an introduction to PebblePad.

Why PebblePad?

PebblePad has tools to support learning, in particular reflective learning, and also has all of the system-design requirements needed for implementing this project. It is all online, secure, easy to manage very large numbers of students, easy for students to use, easy to give students feedback, and easy to gather statistics for the management to ponder. The University was already using PebblePad so there was no additional cost associated with its setup and use for this project.

This means that implementation can take place without having to rely on others and taking valuable resource from IT support teams. As a result the award was up and running and tested inside two months, in time for the start of the new academic year.

The impact

At the annual Careers Fair a sponsorship proposal was presented to many of the organisations attending.

As a result, one very high profile employer is keen to be a sponsor, not only providing some much need funding for marketing, but also offering skills sessions linking to the SEA.

The impact for the student population will not be evident until students graduate and we monitor the DLHE, comparing those students who completed the SEA to those that have graduate work.

The impact for me was that I very quickly got to know many people across campus from academics, to marketing, to the registry; raising the profile of Careers and Employability in the process.

Lessons learnt

Have the confidence to do something unique that can make a difference to each student.

Gaining any kind of technical support is difficult. PebblePad enables you to do this kind of thing without the need for any IT assistance from others.

It is important to make it as easy as possible for the students to use the interface to the award.

I would concentrate more on upfront design of program and then design of the process, including in detail which PebblePad tools to use.

This link is to a 'reflection' on how I am helping others to implement awards within the university: http://bit.ly/pb201202.

This talks a lot about design and not so much about PebblePad, but it is a reminder that PebblePad is a box of tools to support learning and teaching.

I am often asked by academic members of staff to demonstrate PebblePad to students, which to me is a futile task. It is a bit like showing someone a plumber's toolkit, one person might have a look inside, pick up a tool and think what on earth can I do with this? Someone else might say to themselves, 'Maybe I can use this to undo a tap that needs fixing'. Yet another person will go and read a manual on plumbing and then be happy to use most of the tools with an understanding of their use and what they have been designed for. Most students do not bother when left to their own devices. Staff need to take the lead always.

Ideally I would like to have more contact with students and get them to create webfolios to reflect on experiences, involve Personal Tutors more, and even embed it into the curriculum. The latter is already happening in some subject areas.

1. The University administration decided that we should offer an employability award to all students, but there was only funding for one person to develop and coordinate the programme.
2. More information about the SEA is available at http://www.sea.swan.ac.uk.

Wales extends its PDP Qualification

Alysha Morgan, Go Wales

The GO Wales programme provides a work-based learning qualification to all those on a work placement in Wales. Here we find out more about its implementation and development.

GO Wales www.gowales.co.uk (accessed 20 February 2013) organises paid work placements for graduates in Wales. The City & Guilds Professional Development Award has been used for several years as a tool to record achievement and progression whilst on work placement.

Placements last for around ten weeks so they lend themselves well to an early skills audit and action plan followed by a period of action and reflection. The Professional Development Award has enabled GO Wales to enhance the quality of provision and the learner experience.

Accounting and Finance graduate Julija Yaroshevska was unsure of whether a career in finance and accounting would be the right choice for her. She applied for a GO Wales Work Placement to find out what it would really be like to work in the sector which led to an extended contract with British Biocell International Ltd.

Julija explains;
"As part of the placement, I had to review and redraft the existing procedures related to the revenue, purchasing, expenses, fixed assets and inventory processes at British Biocell International in Cardiff. Then, I had to provide fully written procedures together with the appropriate flowcharts."

"I also had to analyse the importance of the data used in the Sage Line 200 software, which involved removal of any redundant information and missing data collection.

Finally, I was also assigned certain accounting tasks, i.e. dealing with different kinds of expenses and invoices, which mostly involved using SAGE Line 200."

"I think that the best part of the placement was a chance to help with the real everyday accounting tasks mainly involving SAGE Line 200 and Microsoft Excel. It didn't just made almost every day of the placement much more diverse than expected, it also gave me a chance to learn something practical about accounting. I am very happy that I was allowed to help with that and that I was given constant support and guidance."

As part of the Work Placement Julija completed the Professional Development Award. Julija believes the qualification helped her realise where she was in terms of professional development and career goals;

"The Professional Development Award allowed me to see a greater picture and understand the real benefits of the placement, which, in turn, led to a certain increase in business awareness."

"The Award was a great opportunity to realistically evaluate the knowledge and skills gained during the work experience and to identify areas for further development and improvement. In a way, the Award was a formal recognition of all the efforts and contribution made towards achieving set goals and objectives during the placement."

"At the end of the placement, I was offered a chance to extend my contract, which I gratefully accepted. So, currently I am still part of the Finance team at British Biocell International Ltd."

"I would definitely recommend this experience. It is a great chance to not just expand your CV but also get a taste of the area of your interest and realise whether it is the right thing for you or not."

The qualification has been extended and is now available to almost 1850 participants on work placement. A team of five within Swansea University work to deliver the Award for all those on a work placement in Wales and are keen to meet and network with others in a similar position in the UK.

CRA
CENTRE FOR RECORDING ACHIEVEMENT

FORTHCOMING EVENTS
ON-LINE WEBINARS OPEN TO ALL

ePDP: How we have learned to acknowledge that students are the shapers of their own reflective practice
Presenter: Maria Rodriguez, Bolton University
Wednesday 6th March 2013

The culture of ePDP has changed, and we, at the University of Bolton have seen it evolving rapidly in the past 4 years. As lecturers, we have evolved from PDP mentors to ePDP observers, as students have taken over the way they present their reflections to the world. And as digital media doesn't stop advancing, student don't stop exploring new media that best supports their subject area and might potentially boost their employability opportunities.

This webinar will present our journey in searching for the 'best approach' to support learners in their PDP path, examples of multiple digital portfolio uses and lessons learned (including Do's and Don'ts!).

Improving practice and provision: assessing an approach to identifying, capturing and sharing experiential learning to individual and organisational benefit.
Presenter: Neil Raven, Loughborough University
Wednesday 24th April 2013 at 1p.m.

The value of learning from work-based experience has been advocated by a number of commentators, including management writers as well as those addressing aspects of management and leadership in the higher education sector. Yet, in this sector, as is the case more generally, evidence suggests limited application in practice, despite recognition of some of the key benefits that can arise from reflecting upon one's practice. Such modest levels of adoption may, in part, be accounted for by the 'frenetic pace' of the modern workplace and a 'premium placed on action'. However, they may also relate to the perceived limitations of the reflective tools that tend to be advocated by writers working in this sector. This study considers the findings from the trialling of a reflective tool aimed at identifying and capturing as well as sharing experiential learning within a team working in university student recruitment and outreach. The evidence gathered indicates a high and sustained level of take up as well as providing support for the value of this approach, not only to individual practice but as a means of evaluating and enhancing the work of the team.

Key Words: reflective learning, professional practice, professional development, evaluation.

Download a booking form here

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