

# Aspect B: model, design and branding

There is scope for a variety of interpretations of PDP in terms of underlying model, design and presentational features ('branding'), and in the method of portfolio creation. In developing an institutional PDP framework(s), it is potentially beneficial if there is a good fit between the institutional or discipline ethos, the 'physical' mechanism of delivery (for example, e-portfolio based), and the mechanisms available for support.

## Self-assessment questions

Key strategic questions are highlighted.

### Underlying ethos

- B1 What is the institutional rationale for the design and presentation of its PDP framework (for example, focused on personal tutors, skills-based, career-orientated or other)?
- B2 What evidence is there that the model, design and branding of the PDP framework fit the needs of the institution's students, as assessed by students, staff and potential employers? [See also Aspect K: benefits for students, page 55, and Aspect L: employability and employment, page 60.]
- B3 What is the nature of the match between the institutional mission and the ethos of the institutional PDP framework?
- B4 How do the institutional PDP framework(s) match to practice in other institutions and 'benchmarking' statements, such as the QAA guidance note (QAA, 2009)?
- B5 How are the requirements of professional and statutory bodies integrated into the institutional/departmental PDP framework(s)?

### Design and branding

- B6 What efforts have been made to ensure that the design of the student-PDP portfolio interface is 'student-friendly' and easy to use?
- B7 How does the design of the PDP framework deliver benefits for students in personal, educational and career development?
- B8 How does the design of the PDP framework facilitate the embedding of PDP activities in the curriculum?
- B9 What mechanisms are used to ensure that the design remains appropriate?
- B10 How are student views taken into account in assessing the design and delivery of the PDP framework(s)? [See also Aspect A: strategy and planning for implementation, page 12, and Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement, page 20.]

B11 How have the needs of cohorts experiencing 'alternative' modes of delivery (for example, flexible learning, distance learning) been taken into account?

B12 Are the PDP resources fully inclusive (for example, how have the needs of disabled students been anticipated in the design and accessibility of materials for PDP)?

B13 How have the needs of students articulating from different backgrounds (for example, FE college, international, direct entry) been taken into account?

### Coordination of design, branding and delivery

B14 How does the design and branding of the institutional/departmental PDP framework assist in communicating its rationale effectively to staff and to students?

B15 In what ways are staff involved in PDP 'delivery' supported (for example, through training events and branded literature, resources and generic presentations)?

B16 What mechanisms are used for determining whether the delivery, design and branding method remains appropriate?

### Commentary

This Commentary assumes that institutions already have established models and associated supporting technology in place, and may be evaluating or developing their model(s). It is important to be able to provide a rationale even for an existing model, because a number of different purposes for PDP have emerged as institutions try to implement the policy of integrating PDP into the academic process.

These different purposes can define whether or not PDP is assessed or where it sits in an institution and whose responsibility it becomes. These are important issues because student and staff engagement can depend on getting these factors right. As Jackson and Ward (2004) commented: 'Different implementation models of PDP aim to achieve different purposes...and there is a need to ensure that there is congruency between the purposes, aims, objectives and intended outcomes and the methods of assessment and criteria used to evidence and assess learning'.

### Underlying ethos of different models

Experience, coupled with reviews of published and unpublished information, indicates that there are three main ways in which PDP frameworks may be orientated:

- 1 with a personal tutor scheme
- 2 with career planning activities
- 3 with academic/study skills and/or recorded learning achievement (for example, portfolios).

These different foci can be represented by the points of a triangle, creating a 'PDP Orientation Diagram' (figure 1a). Since most PDP frameworks include aspects of all three approaches, each can be represented by a point on the two-dimensional space so formed. The use of this method to describe three differing approaches within an institution is illustrated in figure 1b. The orientation diagram can also capture

developmental aspects of PDP, such as the way in which the nature of student engagement might progress in time within a particular programme of study, as illustrated in figure 1c.

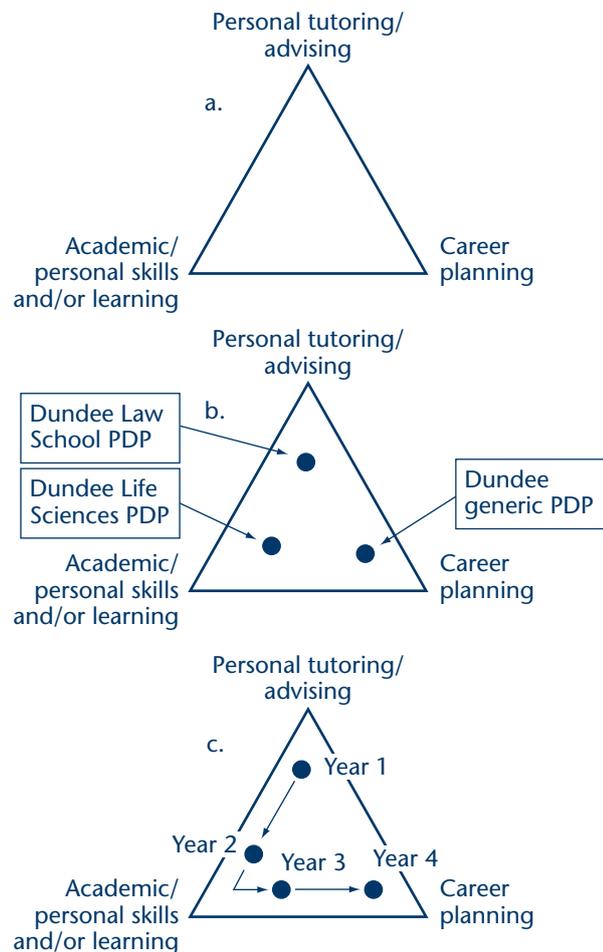


Figure 1: the 'PDP Orientation Diagram'.

- a. A two-dimensional space for describing the orientation of PDP frameworks.
- b. Illustration of the diagram's use to describe three PDP frameworks operating at the University of Dundee. This institution operates an e-portfolio-based PDP framework ('My PDP') that allows for tailoring at the school (department) or programme level through the use of optional templates. Many schools support students in using the University's generic model, which has a strong career-planning focus. The Law School, however, through its LEAP (Law Employability and Professionalism) scheme, has chosen to develop templates that, at least initially, relate to personal tutor activities, while the School of Life Sciences (Learning and Teaching), via its SPELS (Skills and Professionalism in Life Sciences) modules, has decided to promote PDP activities via close links with skills acquisition.

- c. Illustration of the diagram's use to convey a developmental route of PDP engagement. This shows a progression through links to personal tutoring in year 1, skills development (years 2 and 3) and finally career planning in the final year (Scottish 4-year honours degree).

An alternative way to define an implementation model is to refer to the 'ideal type' categorisation developed by Clegg and Bradley (2006), namely professional, employment and academic, which they found in various departments in one university. Haigh (2008) found this categorisation helpful in analysing three case studies showing how PDP is being interpreted and implemented differently in different subject disciplines and the benefits and drawbacks of each model:

'Clegg and Bradley...found that though no ideal type existed in pure form, each ideal type was associated predominately with different disciplines. For example, in their setting health and educational courses tended to adopt a **professional** model for PDP which focussed on reflection. Sport and Leisure and Engineering courses used an **employment** model which focussed on building up a CV and career management while humanities and social science tended towards the **academic** model which focussed on academic development and meta-cognitive skills'.

Another way of considering implementation relates to the nature of the embedding of PDP activities within the curriculum (Atlay, 2006) and is covered in more detail in Aspect G: embedding PDP and the discipline context, page 37.

### User consultation for design and branding

It is expected that an institution will have consulted students and staff during a pilot phase for models currently in use. Because of the diversity of the student population in terms of age, ethnic origin, gender, culture and potential disability issues, it is crucial that usability and accessibility are considered on an ongoing basis, particularly in connection with the technology used, but also with the language used in any associated resources, support needs and the overall design of the model (See also Aspect C: evaluation, review and quality enhancement, page 20, regarding tools to assist in evaluating PDP frameworks and their implementation).

A useful checklist, developed by Peters (2006) 'Issues to consider when designing a Progress File System' asks staff (and/or students) to consider and offer their opinions on a series of key issues when designing progress files. It covers the topics of: outcomes, inputs, output, and process implementation issues, and could be used to review the design of a PDP framework.