

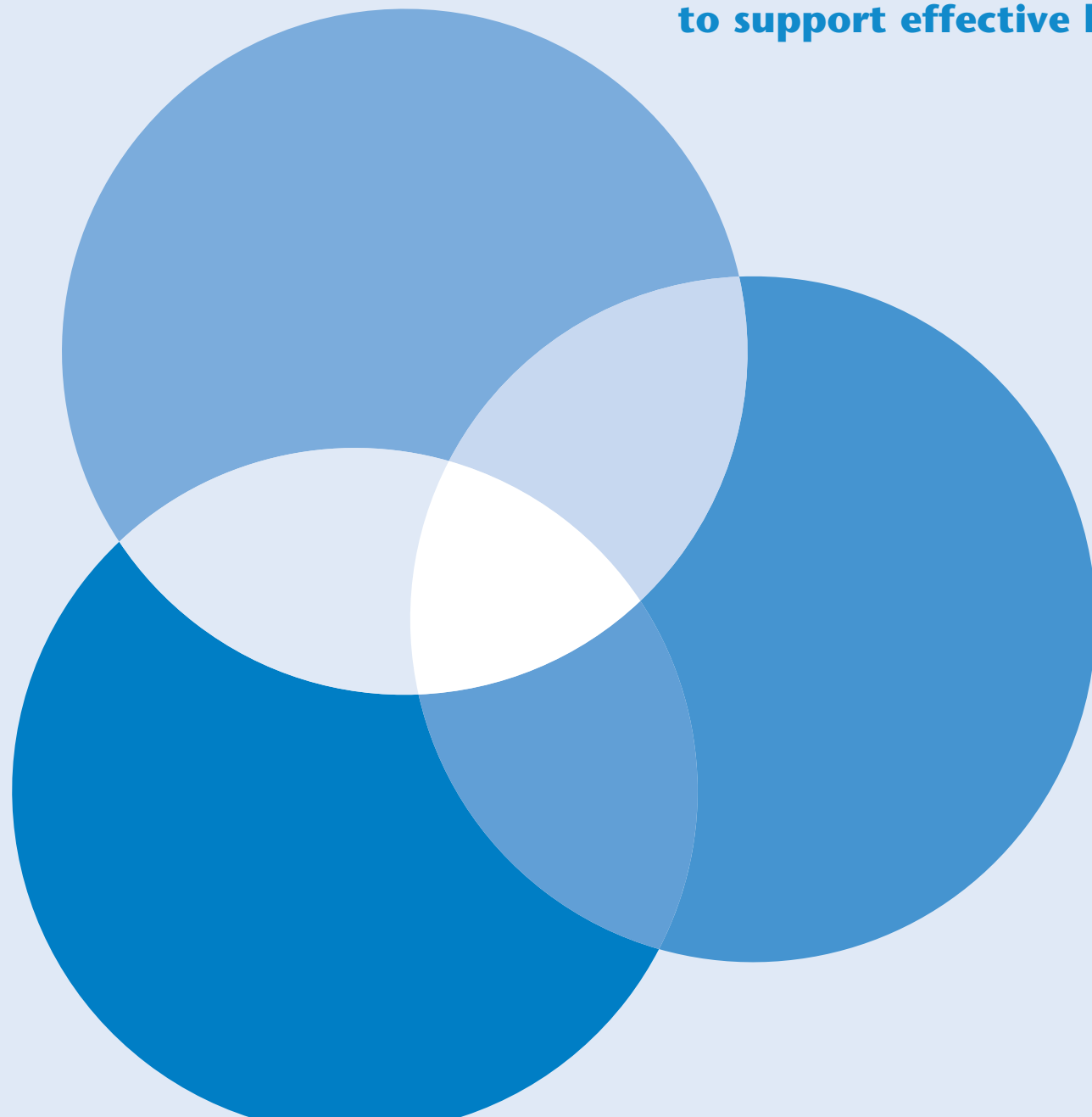
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Effective Learning Framework

Using focused learner questions
in personal development planning
to support effective learning



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Preface

QAA Scotland is extremely pleased to have supported the creation and development of the Effective Learning Framework (ELF). The ELF is designed to work with and complement institutions' emerging practice on personal development planning (PDP) and aims to locate PDP within this wider framework. The underlying ethos of the work of the QAA Scotland/Universities Scotland Joint Working Group (the JWG) complements the Scottish higher education (HE) sector's approach to quality enhancement by identifying the improvement of the student experience in HE as a core value. By helping students to develop the ability to become 'reflective practitioners' no matter what subject they study, PDP and the ELF have the potential to make a significant contribution to the enhancement of the student experience.

The work of the JWG has also benefited from close links with the programme of Enhancement Themes, in particular with the Employability theme and, more generally, with other themes such as Responding to Student Needs, Flexible Delivery and Assessment. Links with Enhancement Themes will continue into the future.

Focused learner questions (FLQs) act as prompts for students to help their self-review process and therefore lie at the heart of the ELF. This publication takes the ELF to the next stage of its development by exploring the purpose and use of FLQs, and it complements and augments the previous publication *Supporting effective learning*. I am particularly pleased to welcome this publication and am very grateful to the members of the JWG for their extensive commitment to this important initiative.



Norman Sharp
Director, QAA Scotland

Foreword

The JWG was constituted in 2002 with the primary goal of supporting the sector with the implementation of PDP. In targeting this goal, the JWG specifically aimed to define and clarify the nature of PDP and how it can be articulated with other aspects of the curriculum. Further, the JWG considered that the core features of PDP were:

- a the ability of the student to undergo a self-audit process that enabled the student to become more effective in their own learning
- b a process embedded as far as possible within the existing curriculum and activities and
- c that the process should be holistic and take in as much of the student's experience in HE as possible.

From these deliberations the concept of the ELF was developed, that is a process that framed and supported PDP within an institution's own overall teaching, learning and assessment strategy.

The concept considers the student experience holistically, by splitting that experience into three overlapping domains: personal, academic and career aspirations, across which the process of self-audit should operate. The actual mechanism for self-audit is centred on FLQs, a series of prompts that aim to help the student to review and act upon their experiences in HE. FLQs can be developed for any of and across the three domains and at different stages of the students' time in HE. A previous publication introduced the Framework, and the purpose of this publication is to continue work on FLQs themselves.

The JWG has benefited immensely from the experience and work of its membership, involving staff and students from HE and members from the college sector and the Scottish Qualifications Authority. This has allowed the JWG to produce a model that has potential to help create linkages between PDP-like processes across the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. All students, no matter their origin, move across different educational sectors and the world of work. An important role for PDP is to help students manage these transitions. We hope that future work in this area will help facilitate cross-sectorial work.

The ELF and FLQs are not designed to replace institutions' existing plans for PDP, nor should they be considered a prescriptive model. They are designed to help institutions think about how their own PDP strategies might be developed. They should also help the sector as a whole start to think about what effective learning for students might mean as PDP evolves in the future climate of enhancement of the student learning experience.

The JWG would also like to thank the Steering Committee for the Enhancement Theme of Employability for support in regards to developing the links between PDP/ELF and employability. This work has been taken forward and the outcomes should be available in a separate publication.

I hope this document is of help to you and your institution and helps stimulate developments in effective learning and PDP. We very much see this initiative as being a partnership involving the whole sector and look forward to hearing from you your experiences with PDP and how it relates to effective learning.

David Ross

Executive summary

This booklet offers a wide range of focused learner questions (FLQs) which can be used to facilitate effective learning through the self-audit process that lies at the heart of student personal development planning (PDP).

The principal audience for use of FLQs are students and this publication provides various FLQs that they might use in different contexts and situations, and to reflect upon various experiences and think reflectively about themselves, their values, ambitions and goals, as part of the preparatory stock taking, episodic or continuing, that acts as the necessary prelude to the action phase of development planning.

The overarching thesis is that PDP will have enhanced utility when the principal focus is upon effective learning. That approach underpins the Effective Learning Framework (ELF) (QAA, 2006) which was developed by a Joint Working Group of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Scotland and Universities Scotland (the JWG).

When the higher education (HE) sector in Scotland was consulted on the ELF early in 2005, further developmental work was sought, particularly to extend the range of illustrative FLQs. This booklet is the product of that project, which entailed staff and students at various focus groups and other events penning illustrative FLQs. There were also related suggestions from graduate recruiters. The Editor has generated further illustrations.

Reflection and reflexivity are difficult high-order skills. Done well, and within a supportive environment, they can enhance learning effectiveness, access powerful insights into values, motivators, strengths and weaknesses, provide the basis for informed developmental planning, and progressively create a realistic sense of grounded and explainable self-confidence for the user.

Recurrent messages in the discussions at focus groups and the interviews with graduate recruiters were:

- the considerable and tangible benefits that derive from meaningful PDP
- the need for PDP to occur within a supportive and encouraging environment
- the recognition that PDP is not a crusade but a process intended to be of tangible benefit to participants
- that PDP does not seek to promote perfection or optimum utility and that, ultimately, it is the student who determines key dimensions of PDP such as the goals, targets or degree of insightfulness of the reflection.

The aims of this booklet therefore are to assist the processes of reflection, by students and others, through presenting illustrative FLQs that refer to a variety of situations and contexts - the three domains of the ELF model, various transition points, specific incidents/events/triggers, and some discipline-specific situations.

With one significant exception it proved a comparatively straightforward challenge for staff and students to generate potential FLQs. The exception was discipline-specific FLQs. That resonates with the fact that many of the valued prompts for use by undergraduates and postgraduates, produced by the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), can readily be adopted by, or adapted for, other laboratory-based science subjects. Of course it is also possible that more extensive developmental work in association with disciplines than was possible within the timescale of this project might have generated a more detailed set of discipline-specific FLQs, as the example from Sociology demonstrates.

External advice from graduate recruiters and others explained the added value that can accrue to PDP from some benchmarking or referencing of PDP - ie a student seeking views from peers, tutors and others. The responsibility and ownership remain with the student, but for such referencing to occur there is a need for shared views of the potential scope and nature of PDP and the creation of an associated supportive and enabling environment. These considerations involve other stakeholders in the processes of PDP. That, in large measure, explains why illustrative FLQs have been generated for those in such roles.

Finally, five case studies on the use of FLQs/prompts in PDP in Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs) are given in the Appendices. Again, these are illustrative not exhaustive.

Readers may also wish to refer to two companion publications by QAA Scotland:

Effective Learning Framework: Supporting effective learning (QAA, 2007) and

Effective learning and employability (QAA, 2007). The latter deals extensively with the employability/career aspects of the ELF model.

Introduction

A major impetus to the adoption of PDP by students was provided by the relevant recommendations in the Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (the *Dearing Report*, 1997). Subsequently, government encouraged the sector to progress the recommendations with support provided by organisations such as QAA.

Most HEIs have implemented student PDP. Some have considerable experience with the processes and have gained insights into both benefits and operational issues. Later adopters have learned from those experiences in designing and implementing their schemes. Since the activity has remained within the control of each institution, schemes vary considerably in details of design, organisation and implementation. Nonetheless, all are intended to encourage and assist self-audit by students (reflection and reflexivity) as a prelude to action in the shape of continuing PDP.

Reflection involves the processes of standing back and considering events, actions and experiences; thinking through what can be learned, or has been learned from them; situating these thoughts and putting them in context (academic, personal and aspirational); and then planning actions that are intended to further personal development over a specified period of time, and/or in relation to particular dimensions, and/or towards particular goals or objectives. Such reflection is demanding and requires the exercising of high-order skills.

Reflexivity, looking inward into oneself, is if anything even more demanding. Without care being exercised, reflexivity could trigger an endless spiral of self-doubt, which is precisely the opposite of the intended goal of PDP, namely raising self-confidence and self-esteem through grounded explicit learning linked to growth and development, and set within the individual context of values, beliefs, aspirations and experiences.

Background

This booklet is one output of work undertaken during 2005-06 designed to assist the implementation of student PDP. In this booklet the emphasis is on the generation of a wide array of illustrative FLQs. These relate to the three domains in the ELF (Figure 1) articulated by the JWG.

Figure 1: The Effective Learning Framework



Later in this booklet there are FLQs targeted at each domain and at interfaces between domains. In addition to the domain-oriented FLQs, examples are included which can be used:

- at a transition point, eg entry to HE, progression to succeeding years, exit from undergraduate study to employment or postgraduate study
- to reflect upon a specific incident or experience
- to address discipline-specific contexts.

Many of the FLQs in this booklet were written by staff and students at focus groups and other related events. Most of the employment/career domain FLQs arose from suggestions by graduate recruiters. The Editor also contributed some illustrative prompts.

In these discussions participants expressed concerns that students might view the range of questions as somewhat daunting. There is no expectation that any student would use all, or even most, of the FLQs. They offer an extensive repertoire of possible questions for use in different contexts, situations and stages. It is not anticipated that the user would elect to ask and answer all of the questions in any group or sub-group. It is for the user to select questions that appeal to them and suit their needs. They may, of course, return to other questions on other occasions.

Some flow diagram/mindmap illustrations of sets of questions are included, although for simplicity most appear as lists or sub-lists.

Five case studies on the use of FLQs/prompts in operating PDP schemes in Scottish HEIs are given in the Appendices. These experiences highlight benefits and air some of the operational and ethical issues which can occur, and record ways of addressing those challenges. These outputs stemmed directly from suggestions made by the HE sector in Scotland in response to the consultation early in 2005 on the ELF model.

These materials are designed to support and promote effective learning. They do not expect or seek perfect knowledge and optimum decision-making by students. However, they do seek to enable informed decisions and to assist explicit reflection. That is not to deny the importance and value of tacit knowledge - things which we know but cannot readily explain or articulate. Helping to make tacit knowledge explicit can be important, for example, in interviews or when one has to substantiate a point or argument.

The remainder of this booklet covers a range of illustrations of sets of FLQs. The next section deals with FLQs for use by students. The succeeding section covers illustrative FLQs for use by staff and managers within HEIs, and the final section targets other stakeholders.

The coverage is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive. It is illustrative and can be used to supplement prompts generated by institutions and by other organisations and interested parties.

To recap, the questions are primarily intended to inform self-auditing by individual students. In large measure that activity is primarily singular and personal, but it can occur in groups, such as groups of students or tutor-led groups. Indeed, graduate recruiters encouraged students to seek the views of others (other students, tutors etc) as part of the self-audit process. Generally, institutions are encouraging students to use e-portfolios as a means of recording PDP. Whether the medium is electronic or paper-based there are important policy and ethical issues surrounding the confidentiality of PDP information, or parts thereof, particularly in relation to some dimensions of self-audit in the personal domain. Students, advisers and institutional managers need to keep under review the guiding parameters and associated limitations for student PDP data when some sharing and/or reporting of these materials is invited or expected.

FLQs for use by students

Pre-entry to HE

The processes of exploration, analysis, questioning and planning start when a student prepares to submit an application to study in an HEI. Indeed for many, the tentative beginnings precede that stage and can be traced back to subject choices in early years of secondary education and/or thoughts about possible future pathways and careers.

For many applicants entering from school or college a key initial stage is the exploration of possible programmes and institutions. Generally, that entails reading literature on websites and from prospectuses, visits to open days, conversations with staff (and often students) and discussions with friends, teachers and parents. Material will also have been gathered about potential careers, especially when the prospective programmes link closely to a specific profession.

Mature entrants follow a broadly similar strategy, although they generally have a wider set of experiences to inform and guide their deliberations.

The key point is that potential entrants to HE have already undertaken a form of PDP, explicitly or semi-explicitly, in reaching the choices in their application form.

For many applicants things work out as they hoped in the sense that they satisfy the requirements of their first choice preference. For some, results are better than expected and some reconsideration of options may occur. Likewise, intended plans may need to be reviewed if the individual fails to be offered a place on the desired programme.

Starting in HE

Whatever the pattern and outcome of these essential preliminaries, actual entry to HE is widely recognised as a major point of transition for a student. It is often described in American literature as the stage of 'getting in', but the crucial part may, in fact, be that of settling in.

The following FLQs may help thinking through and learning from the experiences and emotions associated with this transition.

- Why did I decide to come to university?
- What do I hope to achieve?
- What attracted me to this course?
- What do I feel will be most challenging?
- What strengths do I bring from my previous studies?
- How can I use my previous experiences and knowledge to good effect?
- Do I have any academic weaknesses? How can I address them?
- What can I do to prepare myself for my new experiences at university?
- Are there areas of my chosen programme of study that I anticipate may be difficult? What can I do about them?
- Should I do some pre-reading or other preparation beforehand?
- If so, what?

Settling in: personal dimensions

Research evidence amply demonstrates the importance of the immediate post-entry phase: settling in to the programme, the new rhythm of life in HE, building networks with other students, finding out about the available facilities and services, contacting personal tutors, logging in to the email system etc. The new environments may include living away from home, perhaps for the first time, and sharpening the skills of financial, personal and interpersonal management. Here, appropriate FLQs primarily span the academic and personal domains and the interface between them. First, some personal domain examples.

- What can I do to meet people and develop new friends? How did I do that before? Could I repeat those tactics or would I need to adapt them or try a different approach?
- Should I join lots of clubs and societies or initially try one or two? What experiences do I have of financial, personal and interpersonal management? Am I good at budgeting? If not, how can I get much better at it? Do I have experience of sharing accommodation with someone who is not a relative or close friend? If so, what did I learn from that? If not, what should I expect and how should I prepare and plan?
- What balance should I plan for in relation to managing my time? What proportion of my time should be devoted to my studies and what proportion to other things? What other demands are there upon my time that I need to accommodate, such as work commitments, family commitments, involvement in organisations? Do I expect that balance to change now that I am studying in HE? If so, in what ways and what is involved in managing the changes?

Settling in to the academic routine

Settling in to the academic routine is a core consideration. Additionally, some programmes allow students to make changes to their curriculum during a limited period at the start of the semester or academic year. The following FLQs cover this initial phase of studies.

First, a cluster of questions that probably need to be answered by week two.

- Have I located all the rooms, identified my tutorial and/or laboratory groups, contacted my personal tutor, got my library credentials and email address and done the other initial tasks?
- Do I understand what is expected of me in terms of attendance, reporting absence, making contact etc? Have I read the various handbooks and looked at recommended websites?

Considering permitted changes to the curriculum

Next, questions that apply if it is possible to make changes to the curriculum in the first few weeks of the semester/academic year.

- Did I select any class as an experiment with the thought that I might quickly change to another one? If so, am I now considering a change? What do I know about the alternative(s)? For example, have I also been attending lectures for that class and am I basing my decision on that comparative information?
- Would the change have any additional implications? For example, could it affect my subsequent curriculum choices and even career options? If I decide to proceed with the change, what do I need to do, and by when?

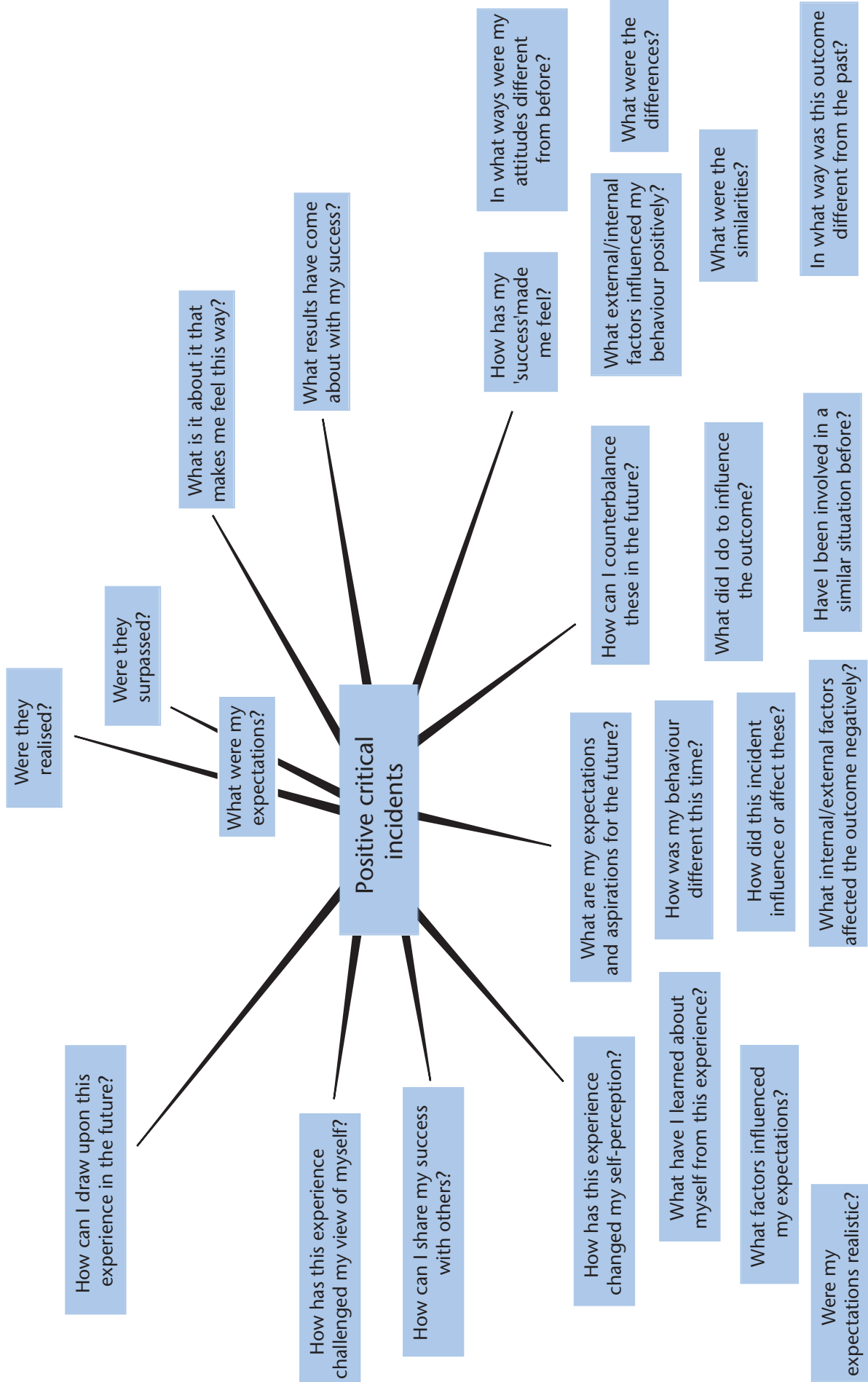
Stocktaking around mid-semester

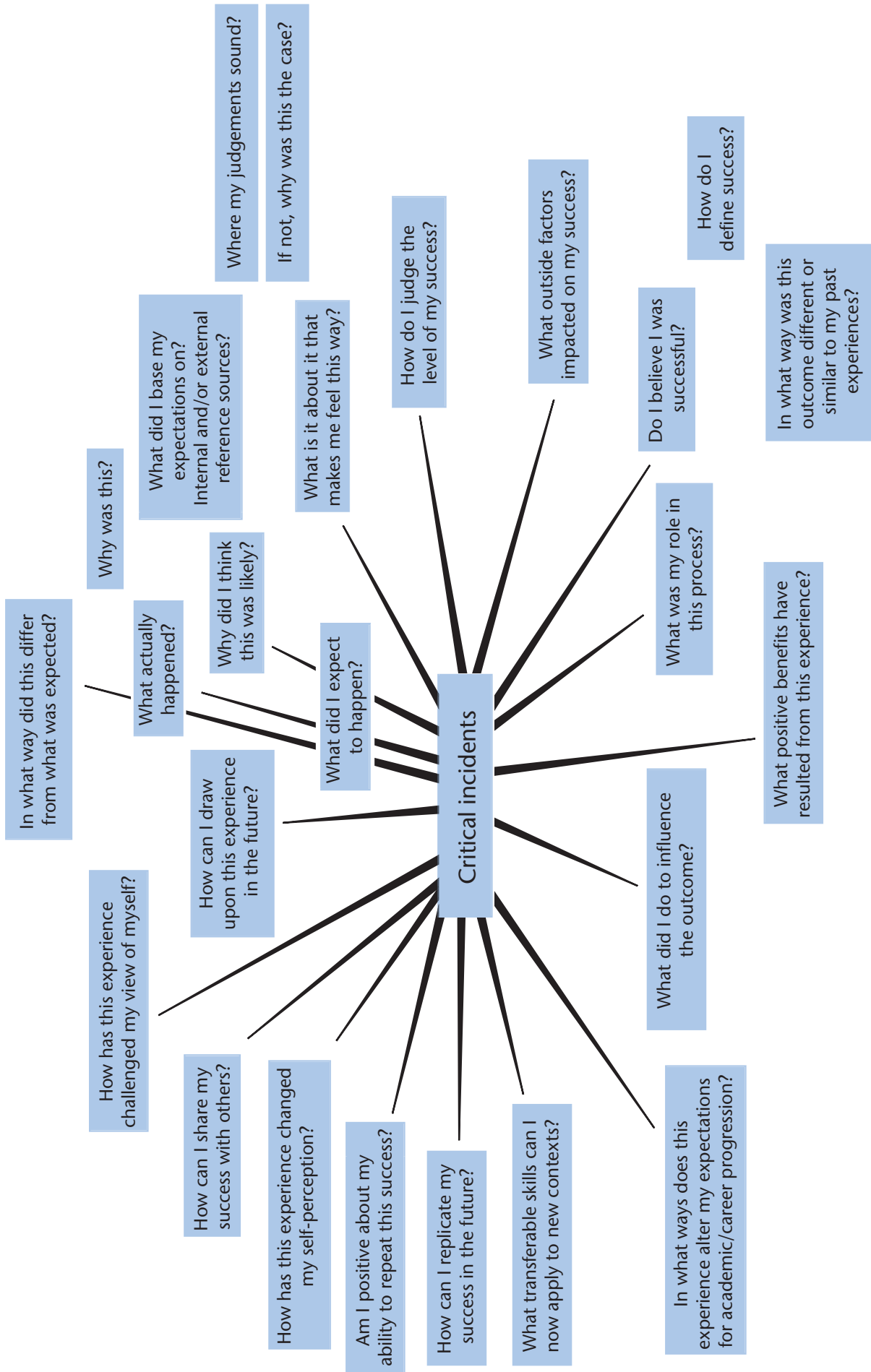
A month or two into studies, it may be salutary to ask the following questions.

- How do my experiences on my programme to date match my expectations?
- What subjects/topics are capturing my interest and arousing my curiosity?
- How do I feel that I am coping with the acquisition of new knowledge? Handling tasks and assignments? Developing a pattern of study (note-taking, reading, planning etc)? If there are any unexpected issues/challenges, what have I done to address them? What evidence do I have that the strategy is working?
- What has been my biggest surprise to date?
- What have I found out about myself since I started my HE studies? How have my skills/knowledge/personal qualities improved since I started my course?
- Do I feel motivated? If not, what could I do to increase my motivation?
- What seems to be valued by people who specialise in my main subject(s)?

Learning from feedback and critical incidents/situations

One of the most difficult, yet powerful, learning opportunities surrounds effectively handling feedback or learning from particular incidents or situations. Feedback (formal and informal) is a recurrent feature of study in HE, so there are numerous opportunities to reflect upon it and to hone skills and adapt strategies. Specific incidents or situations are less common. Indeed, some positive experiences are often difficult to fully comprehend at the time unless you make an attempt to analyse and reflect upon what happened. A negative experience can have an immediate impact, be it as a result of disappointing marks for an essay, an unexpected criticism or an unexpected failure in an exam. In such instances initial reactions are likely to be a mixture of surprise, shock, disappointment and frustration. These emotions are natural responses, but they are not correlates of reflection and considered developmental improvement. The two mindmaps below offer structures to address and develop a positive strategy to learn from feedback and critical incidents.





FLQs that aid reflection on academic issues

Throughout the undergraduate experience, PDP expects students at least regularly, and preferably continuously, to reflect upon their learning, knowledge acquisition and skill development. Illustrations are given below of some FLQs that could be used in specific programmes (Nursing, Sociology, Art/Architecture, Chemistry), but first here are some more generically framed questions.

- What have I learned from this class? (or lecture? or tutorial? or laboratory class? or field course? or work placement?)
- Do I understand the main concepts, theories and ideas of the subjects covered? How can I evidence that knowledge? Are there concepts/theories that I am struggling to comprehend? What can I do about that? How have my skills developed? Are there specific skills that require particular improvement? How will I address that?
- What curriculum choices do I intend to make for next semester/academic year? What influenced my thinking and decision? How does that relate to my performance, interests and possible career opportunities/aspirations?
- Are there specific areas of my performance that I want to improve? If so, what are they and what do I plan to do?

FLQs for students of Nursing

- I believe the purpose of X is?
- I believe this purpose can be achieved by...
- I believe the factors that will enable this purpose are...
- I believe factors that inhibit this purpose are...
- My overall goals in X is?
- What specific qualities do I bring to X that I already use outside work/university?
- My strengths are...
- I need to develop my skills in relation to...
- Who can help me/support me?
- What information do I need to help me?
- What timescale do I have?
- Do I need any training/educational development to reach my goal?
- How comfortable am I with challenge?
- What would enable me to challenge myself more?
- How do I know that my practice is 'best practice'?
- How and where do I access evidence to support my claims?
- What skills/attributes do I need to develop practice?
- Who can help me/support me in developing practice?
- Am I an effective practitioner?
- What does an effective practitioner look like to me?
- Are there any of my peers/colleagues who can give feedback on my interpersonal/teamworking skills?
- What would I most like to know about myself?
- What are the qualities I value in a mentor or clinical supervisor?
- I consider Y to be an example of a good role model...

- The things I value about him/her are?
- What do patients/clients feel about the care/support I offer?
- How can I find this out/evidence my thoughts?
- How do I keep myself up to date?
- What did I like best about placement?
- What did I like least?
- The thing that struck me about the way care was delivered in that setting was...
- Three new things I learned were...
- I would have liked to have had the opportunity to...
- When could I seek that experience in the future?

FLQs for students of Art/Architecture

- What kind of artist/designer/architect do I want to be?
- What are my goals post-graduation? (ie self-employment, industry, studio work, further education, research)
- How do I achieve those goals? What associations carry helpful affiliations? (ie Scottish Arts Council, Royal Institute of British Architects etc)
- How does my course give me access to them?
- What have I gained from studio practice? (ie self-directed working, creative and lateral thinking, ability to vocalise ideas etc)
- What is my practice?
- How have non-academic projects helped me to obtain skills or make contacts? (ie outside exhibitions, year out, employment etc)
- What have I learned from them?
- What areas have I identified as needing attention? (ie writing skills, concentration, organisation etc)
- How can I improve my skills in those areas?

FLQs for students of Sociology

- How did I learn about sociology at this university?
- Did I read anything 'sociological' before?
- How is this subject related to other social sciences?
- How is it different from other social sciences?
- What is sociological explanation and how can it help me to learn about myself and the world?
- How is sociology related to the world of work?
- What kinds of jobs would be open to me after having studied sociology?
- What kinds of thinking skills does sociology involve?
- What kinds of practical skills does sociology involve?
- What aspects of sociology theory do I find a challenge?
- If I think about 'communications skills', how does doing sociology help me to develop these?
- Will thinking sociologically change the kind of person I am?
- Will doing sociology change how I engage with others?
- Do others in my class think the same way about sociology as me?

FLQs for students of Chemistry

The following prompts are based upon questions in the Undergraduate Skills Record which the RSC has created to support student PDP in Chemistry. Here a selection of record statements are presented as illustrative FLQs.

- What is my ability to maintain awareness of specific hazards relating to the physical and chemical properties of chemicals?
- What is my ability to carry out COSSH assessments and handle chemicals safely?
- What is my ability to understand the principles behind and processes involved in experiments?
- What is my ability to measure and observe chemical events and changes, and record these changes coherently?
- What is my ability to understand error margins relating to chemical data and information?
- What is my ability to select and use appropriate techniques and procedures for experimental work?
- What is my ability to use a range of instrumental techniques?
- In any of the foregoing, if there is a need for improvement how do I intend to address it?
- What is my ability to apply acquired knowledge and understanding to the solution of chemical and related problems?
- What is my ability to suggest ideas/solutions in the absence of complete data?
- What is my ability to work from just principles?

The student is expected to reflect upon the evidence that would guide their self-assessment of performance/capability, to highlight areas where they want their performance to improve and to identify plans for pursuing that objective.

The next sequence of FLQs continues the theme, dealing with various contexts and domains as studies progress.

Depending upon the course of study, students experience an evolving, often increasingly specialised and demanding curriculum and a variety of learning environments. Collectively these are designed to enable achievement of the planned learning outcomes and skills development, and to an intended standard or set of standards.

First, three sets of FLQs that address particular learning environments.

FLQs for a work placement

- What did I learn from the placement? How does that relate to the intended learning outcomes?
- Are there intended learning outcomes which I failed to achieve or which should have been progressed further? If so, how will I address them?
- What were the things I enjoyed most in the work placement? Least? How could that affect my thinking about a career and/or my subsequent curriculum choices? How do I feel about that? What do I plan to do about it?
- How did I handle the relationship with my workplace supervisor? What did I learn from her/him?
- What did I enjoy about the work environment?
- What feedback did I receive from my workplace supervisor? Did it surprise me or did it match my perceptions and expectations?
- Did I find the workplace experience motivating? If so, how will that affect my attitude to the remainder of my programme of study?
- How did I relate to others in that workplace environment? What positive things did I learn from them?

FLQs for a field class

- What were the learning objectives of the field class? Did I achieve them?
- What new knowledge did I acquire? What knowledge was reinforced?
- What skills did I practise? Which existing ones improved? What level of performance did I attain with new skills? How could I sharpen and improve these skills in other settings?
- How did I perform on group tasks? What role did I play? What were my strong points? Did I have any weaknesses? If so, how could I address them?
- How would I rate my project management and time management skills based upon my performance in the field class?
- Do I enjoy working in the field?
- How does my performance there compare with my performance in the classroom or laboratory?
- How would I rate my ability in terms of knowledge of, and adherence to, health and safety guidelines while operating in the field?
- How would I rate my ability in relation to fieldwork project design, methodology, data collection, data analysis and report writing?

FLQs for a team project

- What role did I play?
- How did other team members rate my inputs?
- Was I satisfied with their inputs and the overall performance of the team?
- What went well? Was anything less successful? Why did that occur? How could it have been addressed?
- How did I perform in terms of:
 - coming up with ideas
 - building on the ideas of others
 - solving problems
 - motivating others
 - doing the research
 - making a written presentation
 - contributing and/or making an oral presentation
 - sticking to the task and delivering on time and to an appropriate standard.

During their academic studies, students formulate and sometimes reformulate ideas about career options. In shaping their thoughts, graduate recruiters and career advisers encourage students' self-reflection upon personal performance, alongside a consideration of options and related requirements.

Personal/career FLQs

- What demands would my preferred career choice make on me in terms of location, nature of the work, time commitments expected etc?
- Do I have any factors in my personal life which would impact on my choice or constrain me in terms of location or time commitment?
- How do I react to unpleasant situations?
- How do I react to feedback? Do I learn from criticism?
- What personal characteristics do I possess?
- Who influences me? What influences me?
- Do I prefer routines/variety?

- Do I relish uncertainty?
- Do I prefer to be indoors/outdoors?
- How would I feel about a desk job?
- What work-related experiences do I have? Part-time employment? Voluntary roles? What have I learned from these? What skills did I develop in these roles? How can I evidence these skills to an employer?
- How might my motivations and personality impact upon my ability to enter my chosen career?

Skills and behaviour FLQs

- Do I have good presentation/communication skills:
 - oral?
 - written?
 - one to one?
 - in group settings?
- Should any of these skills be improved? How will I do it?
- Am I:
 - shy?
 - outspoken?
- How could that affect my performance at interview?
- Do I feel that I am fulfilling my potential in my academic studies and as a person? Are there areas I would like to improve or develop? If so, which? What specific steps can I take?

Skill-oriented FLQs

- Over the last semester/academic year, are my skill levels effective, developing or needing further development, in relation to (select those relevant to the programme):
 - gathering relevant information from printed sources
 - gathering relevant information from web-based sources
 - selecting relevant data from diverse sources to formulate my answers to assignments etc
 - listening to and assessing the views of others in a seminar or discussion
 - expressing my views clearly and succinctly in writing
 - expressing my views clearly and succinctly orally
 - using statistical data to support my argument
 - manipulating statistical data to solve problems?
- How will I progress areas which need further development?

IT skills FLQs

- Are my information technology (IT) skills sufficient to allow me to produce a well-executed word-processed essay/dissertation/lab report? If not, what can I do to enhance them?
- When researching a topic, how do I recognise web pages/articles/chapters that are relevant and of high quality?
- Do I feel that my IT skills have developed?
- Is there scope for, and a need for, further development?
- What will I do to achieve that goal?

Academic domain FLQs

These FLQs might be used around the mid-point of undergraduate study, say in the second year or early in the third year.

- How does my curriculum 'hang together'? Do I have a broad picture of that curriculum and connections between parts of it?
- Do my interests lie where I might previously have expected them to be?
- What sources of motivation can I use to help me engage in subjects/topics that I don't especially enjoy?
- In what ways have my choices of subjects to date been successful? Less than ideal? What can I learn from those experiences?
- What information do I need to help me make my academic work most relevant to my plans and aspirations?
- In which areas of my studies do I find it easiest to be highly motivated?
- Where is it more difficult to 'see the point'?
- How can I address these low points?
- Why did I choose modules x, y and z?
- How did they differ in respect of:
 - content?
 - subject-specific skills?
 - transferable skills?

Even with careful application to self-reflection and PDP, situations can recur. The following questions might be useful in repeat situations (positive or negative).

Repeat situation FLQs

- What did I do the last time this happened?
- Is that an appropriate response this time?
- Is this situation different in any way?
- What additional skills can I bring to bear this time?
- Who would it be helpful to speak to about this situation?
- What have I learned from this experience? How can I build on that? Do I need to revise or adjust my plan?

Not all students enter university in the first year. Many of those transferring from Higher National Certificate/Diploma (HNC/D) programmes in further education colleges progress directly into the second or third year. That presents a distinctive type of transition, one which can be equally challenging, notwithstanding their experience of successful study. Here are some possible questions for that situation.

FLQs for direct entry to second/third year via transfer from HNC/D programmes

- Are there gaps in my curriculum knowledge compared with others in my class? Does that matter? If so, how will I solve the problem?
- Are there differences in approach to teaching and learning and support compared with my earlier experience? How do I feel about that?
- Do I understand how I am to be assessed?
- Do I understand the marking system?

- Will my approach to planning my workload be appropriate for this situation?
- Do I know how to make best use of the resources and services available in the institution?

FLQs for mature students/part-time students

- How is my course affecting my practice in the workplace?
- How do my experiences at work affect how I view a topic in my course?
- What ideas do I already have about that topic because of my experiences? Are my ideas changing because of my reading and studies?
- What are my past experiences of education? How do they affect how I am approaching learning now?
- What did I used to know but have forgotten?
- Have I rekindled any past interests or revisited neglected skills?
- What have I noticed about my learning style since beginning my course?

FLQs on attitudes to and experience of IT

- What do I like to write about in my learning blog?
- What is the most interesting area of my e-portfolio?
- How is new technology helping me to gain knowledge?
- What new tools interest me most?
- How does my e-portfolio help me to demonstrate my achievements?
- Do I like publishing stories about my learning experiences on the internet?
- Do I contribute to discussion boards? Do I learn from on-line discussions? How does that learning compare in effectiveness to other modes such as reading books and articles, tutorial discussions etc?

Moving on

This may involve progression to postgraduate study or into employment. Both situations are examined below.

FLQs about the transition to postgraduate study

- Why do I want to do this?
- Do I want to undertake research or to gain further knowledge from a 'taught' programme?
- Would the taught programme build directly upon my undergraduate course or take me into a new field?
- If I want to do research, what questions do I need to ask, who can help me answer them and where can I access additional sources of information?
- Am I sufficiently motivated and independent to carry out a sustained piece of research?
- How do I choose a supervisor and topic?
- Will I be able to work closely with only one or two supervisors?
- What qualities would I like in my supervisor?
- How would I like my supervisor to view me in terms of strengths and qualities?
- What are the financial and career implications of postgraduate study? Can I handle these?

Employment-oriented FLQs

These questions can be asked at any stage, but they become particularly pressing as graduation approaches.

- What careers interest me?
- What do I know about them?
- What attracts me to them?
- Are there features that give me concern?
- What skills would I need to do that work?
- What work experience and/or involvement in extracurricular activities add to my attractiveness to an employer?
- Would it help to talk to people who do that job and get their insights?
- Would it help to spend some time in a vacation work-shadowing that job or doing an internship? How would I do that?
- Do my qualifications meet the requirements for the job?
- How can I complete my CV in a way that enhances my job prospects? Who can help me?
- What can I do to prepare for a selection interview?
- Are there selection methods and tests that might be used? How can I find out about them and practise?
- What will be the work role? If there are options, what type of role would I prefer?
- Do I like working with people? Or numbers? Or ideas? Problem-solving? Analysing? Selling?
- What kinds of personal qualities might be needed?
- Do I have these qualities?
- How would I demonstrate them?
- How would I evidence my experiences and my ability to transfer my learning into action in the workplace?
- How can I show my level of ability in the desired skills?
- How can I express my values and motivation?
- Do these match those expected for the role?
- If I can't gain my chosen type of role immediately on graduation, what are my options? How should I weigh and evaluate the alternatives? How do I translate that decision into a positive strategy?
- What should my new development plan entail?
- What will be the milestones? What can I consult?
- If I do enter my preferred job immediately, what transition should I expect? How can I prepare? Who and what could help me to prepare?

Illustrative FLQs for use by tutors, departments, career advisers and institutional managers

While it is widely accepted that prime attention and ownership of PDP should rest with the student, the process provides opportunities for various internal stakeholders to help create a supportive, encouraging learning environment with curricula, assessment, and teaching and learning strategies aligned to lead to a common purpose. It could also have implications for the approaches adopted by staff, departments and institutions, and should certainly feature prominently in dialogue about policy and practice and evaluation of their effectiveness.

Questions for an academic department

- What does it mean for a student to study history/physics/law etc in this department in this institution?
- What is different about our students from those in other departments in this institution and/or equivalent departments in other institutions?
- How do we articulate this to ourselves, our students, the institution, employers etc?
- What is done to embed this into the student experience?
- Are there gaps in that experience? If so, what should we do about them?
- How do we support and enable our students to deal with increasing independence as learners within this department?
- How do we know if that strategy is succeeding?

Questions that a careers adviser might ask of a student

- What makes our students stand out?
- What attitudes, approaches and skills do we expect our students to develop in their time here?
- How do we articulate this to students, staff and others?
- How do we monitor it?
- What do we do/need to do to ensure that students develop in these ways?
- Who/what will support the student to develop in these ways through academic study, extracurricular opportunities, work/voluntary experiences?

Questions that academic staff might ask students

- What specific (sub-discipline) area of your subject do you want to work in following graduation?
- Which companies in this area of work appeal to you? And why?
- What qualities are you looking for in a company/employer and how will you recognise these qualities?
- In turn, what qualities is your chosen company looking for from a graduate in your discipline?
- Why should they choose you rather than one of your fellow students?
- You still have X months before graduation; what do you plan to do to ensure that you have the best chance of being chosen?

Questions for a tutor to use to encourage a student to reflect upon and plan to enhance her/his performance

- Are these marks a good reflection of your abilities?
- If not, why not?
- Do you want to do something about this?
- If so, what do you think most needs to be done?
- From that list what would you prioritise? How do you intend to take steps to progress that priority/those priorities?
- What specific things will you do and how will you check on their effectiveness?

Questions that a tutor/careers adviser or another student/friend could use to assist preparation for a job interview

- Give an example of when you saw an opportunity to do something which would improve something for you or other people. Describe the opportunity, what you had to do to make the most of it, and the beneficial effects of what followed.
- Give an example of when you set yourself a challenging goal. Describe what made it challenging, how you dealt with the challenges, and what outcome(s) resulted.
- What aspect of your studies have you not enjoyed? Why?
- What is the greatest academic challenge you have faced and handled successfully? How did you go about it?
- Give an example of a situation which made you feel uncomfortable. What happened and what did you learn from that experience?

Prompts for staff to use with a student facing a difficult experience

- How did you feel before this happened?
- How did you feel immediately after it happened?
- What did you do?
- Did you discuss it with anyone? Did that help?
- How do you feel now?
- What do you want to do next? Do you feel ready to make a plan of action? What should be the first steps? And then? How do you want to check that it is progressing?

Next, a series of questions which staff might usefully ask themselves in order to reflect upon additional steps or actions they might take to enhance and align the supportive learning environment so that it facilitates effective student PDP.

Questions about PDP

- What is PDP?
- How do I expect PDP to benefit my students?
- What can I do to support the achievement of those goals and objectives?
- What support is available to me within the institution? From my discipline? From other sources?
- How will the requirement of PDP fit into the intended learning outcomes of my programme?
- Should I model the benefits of PDP to my students?

Illustrative effective learning domain questions that staff might ask of themselves

- Does my learning, teaching and assessment strategy provide flexibility in recognising many student entry profiles?
- How do I raise students' awareness and confidence in the transference of literacy for learning from personal to academic experiences and vice versa?
- How does my formative assessment inform student understanding and learning?
- How do I work with other university support/academic staff to build bridges across the student experience?
- Why do I teach this material in this way?
- How does my teaching develop and make explicit the 'transferable skills' required for employment?

- How do I prepare students to bridge into new experiences such as work placements, field classes, practicums, internships or dissertations?

Illustrative FLQs for use by other stakeholders

Brief prompts are offered here, intended for use by various sets of stakeholders.

Firstly, there are questions which might prove useful for employers, professional and statutory bodies (PSBs), QAA, the Higher Education Academy, the Research Councils and the Funding Councils. As a prelude it is acknowledged that these bodies have indicated and demonstrated a willingness to support HEIs in implementing student PDP and, more generally, to support exploration of meanings and ways of demonstrating and supporting effective learning. These questions are intended to assist reflection upon these aims and endeavours.

- What does good practice mean in this context?
- How can you help institutions, their staff and students, to understand the benefits of developing effective, reflective and holistic approaches to learning and personal development?
- What is happening in other sectors and other countries that may be of relevance? How can that information be shared with HEIs? How can they be encouraged to reflect upon those experiences?
- What initiatives have you undertaken and what resources have you created which inform practice in relation to PDP? How is that information shared with HEIs, disciplines and practitioners? How effective is that dissemination?
- Could more be done to promote effective dissemination and usage of the outputs?
- How could strong bridges and partnerships be developed? What would that entail?
- Would you want research to be commissioned into the effectiveness of PDP in promoting effective learning and achieving other intended outcomes? Would you use the outputs of that research to inform policy and practice?

Students as peers

An integral component of the functioning of departments and institutions is the philosophy of nurturing and developing peer relationships (academic and social) among students through academic programmes, residential communities and the numerous clubs and societies.

Practices within academic programmes require students in groups or teams to interrelate, share, discuss and test their ideas and understandings, to 'assess' the work of peers, and to address and manage tasks and projects. Within those contexts, formal and informal, students as peers recurrently interact and explicitly or implicitly use prompts and questions to develop understanding and thus further their learning. The intention here is not to present an array of questions for such interactions. Often an essential phase is one of clarification, as in the following questions.

- What do I think we are expected to do?
- What is the task? What must be answered/solved?
- How do I know that is true?

When reading the essay of another student, as part of peer assessment, questions can include:

- Why did they take that approach? Use that material? Present it in that way?
- How did that address the question/task?
- How does it meet the criteria?

- How does it compare with my approach?
- Do I think it is a better approach than mine?
- Why do I think that?
- What are the strengths of that approach?
- Does it have any weaknesses/limitations?

Concluding remarks

Almost a decade ago the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education was convinced by arguments that PDP should become a formalised and normal developmental practice of all students in HE. Subsequently the sector accepted that recommendation and has been progressively translating it into action. Evidence to date suggests that it has been simplest to achieve in professional programmes. In such situations PDP sits neatly into ideas of a developing understanding of what it entails to be a professional in that field and to reflect upon progress in attaining necessary competences and developing appropriate practices and behaviours. In essence these ideas demonstrate purposeful effective learning, which is the overarching philosophy of this publication.

Here the working proposition is that effective learning potentially spans three domains - the academic, the personal and the aspirational (career/employment/purpose oriented) and the various interfaces between these. It can also be viewed on other dimensions such as points of transition and specific situations or incidents.

Illustrative prompts, FLQs, have been generated to illuminate these components and perspectives. The overwhelming majority of FLQs are intentionally designed for use by individual students. However, they could readily be adapted for group discussion and reflection. A smaller array of FLQs are offered for use by other stakeholders.

It is for users to select which of this rich array of FLQs suit their particular needs and situations. The expectation is that many users will draw from different sets of questions at different stages and to address various situations and contexts.

While extensive, the illustrations are not exhaustive. Institutions and departments are encouraged to extend the coverage, to fill gaps and satisfy specific needs or purposes.

In the numerous discussions which took place with staff and students in the course of this project, there were two recurrent messages. Firstly, there was a willingness to help to make PDP successful, meaningful and motivational, to be an experience which adds value for users. Secondly, there was a desire to share resources, disseminate case studies and learn from the experiences of implementation of PDP and encouragement of effective learning.

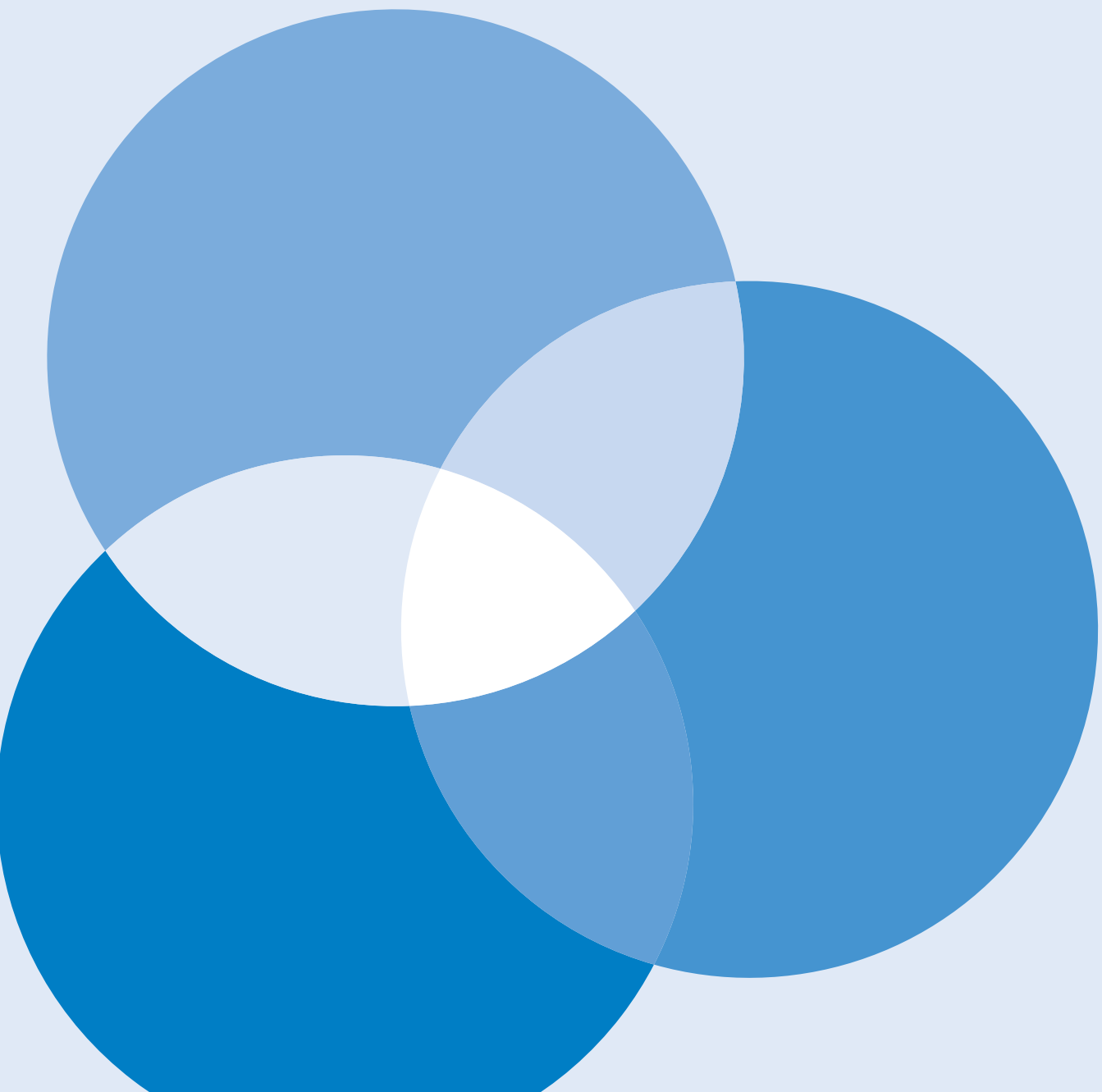
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Appendices



Appendix 1: ELF case study 1

Title of case study:	Links with the ELF model in 'My PDP' - an on-line PDP resource on the Blackboard virtual learning environment (VLE) platform
Author:	Kirsty Miller
Institution:	University of Dundee

Summary

All undergraduate students at the University have access to a PDP scheme which incorporates an on-line resource supporting the PDP process, together with an e-portfolio, delivered via Blackboard. The university-wide model was rolled out in September 2005 with the support of deans, via an induction programme jointly delivered by academics and careers advisers to all faculties. A core element in the success of the take-up was the availability of a generic model with scope for 'tailoring' content to specific subject areas.

Due attention was given very early on in the design of the resource to the ELF model, incorporating linked elements relating to academic, career and personal development. Each topic is introduced with a common format of wording: What's in it for me? What will I learn? How will I do this? In addition, content is added to a PDP portfolio via templates, populated by text prompted by a series of self-reflective activities incorporated in the resource's topics.

The majority of first-year students have an opportunity to have elements of PDP assessed, either within their academic course or via an optional module in Career Planning or Internships. Student feedback to date has been very positive, as has feedback from academics engaged in delivery.

Description

The model

Following Senate's approval of a University of Dundee PDP policy, an e-portfolio-based PDP scheme was made available to all undergraduate students at the beginning of the 2005-06 academic session.

A key factor in this success was consultation and collaborative working. The Working Group was led by the Careers Service and the Learning Enhancement Unit, supported by Academic Affairs, and involved Academic Professional Development, Disability Services and Dundee University Students Association. Staff and students had played an active part throughout the development.

The resulting scheme is delivered via the University's student e-learning portal, *My Dundee*, using Blackboard Academic Suite™ software, as an on-line resource entitled 'My PDP'. It consists of a two-part model:

- an on-line resource supporting PDP activities
- an e-portfolio built from templates as part of structured activities that encourage reflection and prompt prioritised action points.

Ownership of the PDP portfolio lies with the student and they share all or parts as they wish (or are told to as part of an assessed module).

As well as 'My PDP' being a generic resource for all students, faculties are free to embed PDP and tailor content to their specific needs. This is provided in three key design elements:

- a 'My Degree' area with scope to explain how PDP will be implemented and embedded within individual degree courses
- module and degree-specific templates that students are asked to incorporate in their PDP portfolios in place of the standard (generic) ones; for example, related to benchmark statements on transferable skills
- example PDP portfolios created by students studying in specific faculties and courses, which are presented as exemplars.

Practice: curriculum-based

All seven faculties have engaged in PDP, with some departments moving ahead more rapidly than others in deciding how it should be supported. The majority have decided to introduce PDP at level 1, but Law, for example, has opted for level 2.

One example of a strategy is in Town and Regional Planning, where students will be introduced to the concept of reflective learning and reflective writing during year one, followed in year two by an introduction to 'My PDP', assessed in a generic skills-based module. In year three, the emphasis will be on planning and environmental management-related knowledge and skills, using specific templates. In year four, students will be asked to provide a critical reflection of their experience during their initial planning and environmental-management education in the form of an e-portfolio.

A range of departments, as well as the Careers Service, have integrated PDP activity into modules. Examples include:

School/department	Module where embedded	What is assessed	% contribution to overall assessment	No. of students
Life Sciences	Level 1 module 'Genes, Heredity and Development'	Introductory section & transferable skills	6%	242
Engineering and Physical Sciences	Level 1 'Professional Studies'	CV building	10%	82
Accountancy	Level 1 'Information Systems'	Portfolio	10%	104
Careers Service	Level 2 'Career Planning'	Action planning	10%	94

Practice: generic use

With regard to the generic PDP resource, there is evidence that students from first year to postgraduate level are engaging with 'My PDP', finding it useful, and are relating it to personal, academic and careers development. This is encouraging in terms of students making progress towards becoming independent, autonomous, self-aware learners, particularly as some of these students will not have had a formal introduction to the resource.

In a recent online survey, 130 students came up with positive comments on why they found 'My PDP' useful. The comments can be categorised under five headings:

- a structured way of organising material or time
'very useful for not forgetting my assignments' (second-year student)
- writing as an aid to reflection
'I have found it very useful, as I have managed to get my thoughts and goals written down' (first-year student)
- a self-awareness raising exercise
'I think it helps you to know all the positive things you have done and ways to improve' (first-year student)
- a guide to constructing a CV
'I found My PDP very useful as it helps when, for example, writing a CV, in understanding what skills you have' (second-year student)
- a means of communicating with a lecturer or employer
'It was quite useful in sharing work with lecturers to know how you are doing in your studies' (first-year student).

Implementation

In September 2005, faculties provided dates for running a one-hour induction session(s) for their first-year students. Some were held in lecture theatres to the whole year group (240 students); others were 'hands-on' sessions in IT suites to smaller groups, with additional staff support. Approximately 1,600 students attended induction. Extra support was available through an email help-desk facility and support workshops.

Factors which helped implementation were:

- having a PDP policy which ensured that all faculties engaged
- consulting with deans, which ensured cooperation
- having a joint induction (careers advisers and academic staff), which made the content relevant to the different faculties
- having a set of pre-prepared, high-quality induction materials, which was cost-effective in terms of staff time and gave a good impression to students
- having enthusiastic academic staff, which helped student engagement
- delivering sessions in IT suites and lecture theatres, as appropriate
- delivering the resource on the VLE, which encouraged student engagement
- delivering well-received staff development sessions.

Factors which hindered implementation were:

- the logistics of finding a space in the curriculum for large groups, particularly if the group did not have common core modules, for example in Arts

- users not making the link between adding content to templates in their PDP portfolio and having supportive material in the resource. This has been addressed in revised induction materials
- the learning curve necessary for academic staff in terms of familiarisation with the materials. More staff development is planned
- the learning curve for some students new to the VLE
- the preference for a more visually orientated resource for some from Art and Design.

Use of prompts/questions

Due attention was given very early on in the design of the resource to the ELF model, incorporating linked elements relating to academic, career and personal development. The four-part process adopted followed an established careers model (self-awareness, opportunity awareness, decision making, transition skills), but with the addition of learning styles and learning-related action points. A strength of the model is making links between these factors.

Each topic in 'About Me' (self-awareness) and 'Opportunities' (opportunity awareness) relating to aspirations and goals, transferable skills, interests and motivations, personality and personal qualities, and learning styles is introduced with a common format of wording.

- What's in it for me? (highlighting potential benefits)
- What will I learn? (transparent learning outcomes)
- How will I do this? (step-by-step instructions to add content to a PDP portfolio via templates).

In addition, templates are integral to the design and are populated by text prompted by a series of self-reflective activities, quizzes and audits, incorporated into 'My PDP'. 'How do I learn best?' is an example of an FLQ preceding a self-diagnostic learning styles questionnaire.

It is early days, but feedback from staff who have embedded PDP into a module shows that the majority of students have enthusiastically engaged with the model of prompts and reflective activities, and have produced some excellent examples via their shared e-portfolio.

Support

The University's PDP policy states that each student is responsible for their own engagement with the process. Faculties are responsible for deciding if and how PDP should be deployed and providing the necessary tutor support. Support is also provided centrally for the generic resource by the Careers Service, Learning Enhancement Unit, IT Services and Registry (transcript). This support includes an email help-desk facility and follow-up workshops to assist students to create and refine their PDP portfolios.

Evaluation

To date, evaluation data has been sought for mainly developmental practice, in order to review and develop the content of the resource. Recent evaluation of the process of implementation has been obtained from faculties via a pro forma describing their practice; a focus group for careers advisers; an on-line survey of students; course evaluation (where PDP was embedded); and student focus groups.

Indicators of the effectiveness of the PDP process include:

- the quality of e-portfolios successfully created and shared with staff in embedded modules
- the fact that 'students...have voluntarily populated one or more of the other sections not required for assessment purposes' (Life Science)

- the doubling of first-year students visiting the Careers Service to discuss enhancing their CV
- the student feedback received: 'My PDP is very useful as it helps to build a network of how I am developing my various skills, so I am able to target various areas of study and self-development in order to improve and achieve the occupation I desire' (third year)
- insightful staff comment: '...tendency to use the templates to record achievements rather than reflect on learning, but some of the reflective pieces showed good awareness' (Town Planning).

Appendix 2: ELF case study 2

Title of case study:	PDP using FLQs in BEd (Primary) degree
Author:	Dr Gillian Inglis
Institution:	University of Strathclyde

Summary

This case-study report relates how a professional course tailored a broad, faculty approach to PDP to meet the needs of BEd (Primary) students by using FLQs. The development of Progress File materials to support the students provided them with structures and exemplars to assist them in self-assessing and evidencing their progress towards *The Standard for Initial Teacher Education in Scotland* (QAA, 2000) and the core skills identified by the University. Questions were set into audits that required students to evaluate and evidence their self-ratings. Flexibility was ensured by providing a potential framework for reflective log entries for students who found it difficult to 'get started', but students retained autonomy to design this section in a way that suited their own learning. The initiative was driven by the appointment of a Progress File Development Officer.

This development was introduced in 2003-04 and this case study discusses evaluation data from two academic years, so far, through questionnaires and focus groups. Although these materials are optional to the students taking the faculty PDP module, the pattern of use has been steadily growing. Feedback from final-year students indicates that the materials have a variety of purposes, including supporting the final assessment for the faculty module, preparing students for placement and assisting students in writing their statement for their National Profile, which will form the action plan for their professional induction year.

Description

The Faculty of Education had an established vehicle for PDP through a cross-faculty module, Personal Development in a Professional Context (PDPC). This module was taught in mixed undergraduate classes from the beginning of the student's degree and incorporated lectures and tutorials with individual student-tutor meetings in the final year. Assessment took place in the third year (fourth year for BEd students) in the form of a reflective review of learning during university, drawing on reflective log materials and planning towards the next stages of the student's development.

The cross-faculty approach allowed interaction between students that facilitated discussion of issues such as collaborative work. On the other hand, it also meant that advice on keeping a reflective log and a supporting portfolio of evidence had to be generic rather than course-specific. The Faculty educated students for various careers with their own professional standards; thus, the BEd degree became interested in generating materials that would help the students to track their progress towards *The Standard for Initial Teacher Education in Scotland* (QAA, 2000). This was facilitated by the BEd becoming a PDP pilot study in the University during 2003-04. The pilot study appointed a Progress File Development Officer (this role has been continued in the post of BEd Coordinator of Shared Learning and Progress Files) and led to the development of Progress File materials. This work supplemented the PDPC module rather than replacing it.

Providing an overview of PDP in the BEd degree is a complex task: students in the degree validated in 1999 (currently years three and four) continue to take PDPC with the addition of the Progress File materials; students in the degree validated in 2004 have PDP embedded in their own degree with

a different model of support and assessment; and students in 2005-06 saw the introduction of a web-based format that will be further integrated into modules across the course in 2006-07. This report will focus on the students who were introduced to the Progress File materials to support the PDPC module, as this is where the use of question formats and exemplars began in the degree: it formed the foundation of what was to follow and there is evaluation data already analysed for the first two years of this approach.

Implementation

The Progress File materials developed in 2003 provided an advice section on keeping a Progress File. It described an experiential model of learning and set clear purposes for using a Progress File, including tracking progress towards professional standards. It also explained the key skills of the University of Strathclyde and linked the personal transformation that can come about through HE. As the author, I was keen that the students did not view reflection and development as an isolated activity that they did in a module or by using the FLQs provided for the Progress File. Thus, each year module leaders identify existing course tasks/assessments that already require students to consider their professional, academic and personal development, and these are included in the advice to encourage students to identify and make cross-course links in their PDP.

Students were asked to organise their Progress File under six sections:

- 1 Coursework and assessment
- 2 Reflective log
- 3 Professional development
- 4 Key skills and personal development
- 5 Action plans
- 6 CV.

Advice and formats with questions to focus evaluation were provided. Experience in working with students in the PDPC module had indicated that, while some students responded well to open PDP formats, other students found it hard to 'get started', particularly in generating a reflective log. Exemplars were provided to scaffold the work of these students.

In the pilot year, the Progress File was introduced to every year group. The Development Officer did this through induction sessions and prompted the students during the year at key points through visits to lectures or by email. The work was communicated to tutors across the degree and the staff working on PDPC. The year groups which currently remain on this model are still given inputs at crucial points. For example, in addition to their PDPC module, a fourth-year lecture is given on using the Progress File to support the PDPC assignment and contributes to their School Experience lectures by talking to them about using the Benchmark audit to review their progress and set an agenda for final school placement. Issues arising out of this work are discussed by the Development Officer in the evaluation section.

Use of prompts/questions

Prompts were developed that guided the students in the sections of the Progress File.

Section 1: Coursework and assessment

Students were advised to keep relevant coursework and assessments here. The advice section described a range of assessments, including peer, self, tutor and placement as well as formative and summative.

Section 2: Reflective log

Students already explored different writing approaches in PDPC, but some students still reported difficulty in understanding what to put in a reflective log. The Progress File materials provided a format with basic headings to help students to record their ideas, but reinforced that it was for the students to find a way of writing in this section that best suited their approach to learning. An exemplar of a student completing an entry was provided for students who remained unclear on the kind of writing needed. The advice section included a grid of links to work across their course that could be drawn into this section, for example, the self-evaluation that they wrote for Environmental Studies assessment.

Section 3: Professional development

The course already had schedules that tutors used to assess students on school placement; these were based on *The Standard for Initial Teacher Education in Scotland* (known informally to the students as 'the Benchmarks'). An audit was developed that turned these statements into questions. It followed the simpler format used in the placement assessment sheets to provide continuity for the students. This audit asked the students to evaluate how they thought they were progressing in an aspect, to list supporting evidence and to self-rate themselves on a numerical scale. An exemplar was provided of a partially completed audit to guide students: in the absence of additional tutor support to the PDPC module, the Development Officer wanted the students to have as full information as possible to be able to tackle the work independently. The School Experience strand of the course began to embed this work and their tutors supported students in using the Benchmark audit to review their progress and set action points for future school placements.

Section 4: Key skills and personal development

An audit was created for the University's key skills that gave continuity of format to the Benchmark audit. (These skills are known elsewhere as core skills or transferable skills). Again, an exemplar section was provided. In the pilot year, exemplars were written for the Progress File that represented students across different year groups; over time, sets of exemplars are being created that are written from the perspective of students from singular year groups. The advice section identified personal skills for which students may also want to think about recording their progress and there was a suggestion of a recording format, but no set formats provided.

Section 5: Action plans

Students were advised to use their self-ratings in the audits and a review of their other entries to identify a few targets to work on each year. An action plan format was provided and a completed exemplar. In the pilot phase, students were responsible for monitoring and seeking support for their action planning; in subsequent modules, the monitoring and support for this progress have been built into the course and link into PDP assessment.

Section 6: CV

Work with the University Careers' Department led to a model of a CV that is included in the materials.

The pilot phase's Progress File appendices are attached with this report.

Support

Students received tutor and peer support for PDP in the cross-faculty module PDPC. Progress File materials were written up fully with advice, audits and exemplars to give course-specific support without additional tutor support. Additional tutor support was given in the main by the Progress File Development Officer.

Evaluation of effectiveness

The effectiveness of the Progress File materials was evaluated in 2004 by a questionnaire and focus groups with years one and four students. In 2005, data was collected from year four students and this pattern of data collection is ongoing. The scope of this case study limits reporting on this data in detail; key points that emerged from the 2004 data that were responded to in the revalidated degree were as follows.

- Accreditation - students reported seeing a value in the materials, but they found it difficult to prioritise the work where there was not direct accreditation. In the revalidated degree, PDP is located in the degree with credits provided for assessment in years one, two and four. One of the BEd principles for PDP is that assessment is designed to support student progress rather than as an end in itself. The year two students recently completed an assessment which reviewed progress in the last action plan and set a new action plan that linked to their option and school placement choices for years three and four. Also, as a principle is file confidentiality, assessments ask students to draw upon this information to evidence assignments, but full Progress File submission is not expected.
- Support for reflection - students would like tutors to support them with the Progress File. Students now have PDP tutors and peer-group support during their degree. Interaction with tutors is on an individual as well as a tutorial basis. A principle of PDP in the BEd degree is continuity of experience by moving through the degree in the same PDP classes established in year one with the same tutors, where possible.
- Course-specific versus cross-faculty groups - students reported benefits from working with students from other courses, but they felt that aspects of their development were so specific to the teaching profession that PDP should be undertaken with other BEd students. Students on the revalidated degree work in course-specific groups with tutors who have experience in working with these students. The embedding of PDP in the degree has allowed integration of PDP across the degree; this target is ongoing and being developed further through a web-based format as part of the Re-engineering Assessment Practices project. The Shared Learning strand will provide opportunities for BEd students to work in cross-course groups in the year three Collaborative Practice module instead.
- Start in year one - students wanted the Progress File from year one. This has been the pattern since 2004. One of our principles for PDP is that the students receive more support and guidance in the early stages of their degree and assume greater autonomy for the PDP as they progress. PDP is unfolding in the revalidated degree in the Shared Learning strand and takes place in each year of the degree. (Shared Learning is a faculty initiative that identifies common learning outcomes for all its undergraduate students).

Between 2004 and 2005 the following changes were observed from the year four student data:

- the purpose of the Progress File was becoming clearer, although this remained an area to focus upon; these students had gained the materials during their degree rather than at the beginning
- overall, the pattern of students making some use of the Progress File materials in year four had improved from 63 per cent in 2004 to 70 per cent in 2005. It should be remembered that, in their model of PDP, the use of these materials was optional to supplement the PDPC module
- the data on the separate sections of the Progress File indicated increased use of the reflective log pro forma and the Benchmark audit. (The Benchmark audit showed a particularly good rise from 32 per cent in 2004 to 54 per cent in 2005 - this may be due to many tutors embedding it in their School Experience work). A 2004 focus group participant observed on the Benchmark audit:

'It was quite good that it's not a big substantial thing and yet it's not like a massive box you have to fill. The fact that it's small and just bullet points you're just noting down a few evaluations. You're not having to write 500 words on each thing. [Other students agree.] It's just, you know, a few brief comments and then, I think, the rating, although you said you didn't like doing that, it, [she indicates another participant] it does kind of help to show you where you think you are and when you do look back, like at the end of placement, I just happened to look at mine and then I did think, "Oh, look my rating's jumped" and, as you said, it is a confidence boost.'

- the pattern of students identifying links between the Progress File materials and the PDPC module had increased, with more students reporting using the materials to complete their final PDPC assessment
- there had been some progress in making links to other programmes, mainly School Experience and PDPC. The pattern for making use of the Progress File for writing the final evaluation of school placement improved, but it was not making a significant impact. 15 per cent of respondents reported making this link in 2004, while 26 per cent used the Progress File to write the overall placement evaluation in 2005. This is not necessarily a 'bad thing' as students said that they are comfortable using their weekly evaluations required during placement to compose the overall evaluation. A higher number made use of the materials to help them to write their section of the National Profile that is used to set their agenda for the induction year in teaching. While the pattern is improving, this remains an aspect to strengthen further.

Appendix 2.1: Master copy - Reflective log format

Date of entry

Brief description of events

Key theme(s) emerging from event

Why did the event happen this way?
(Including what strengths/areas for development did you demonstrate)

Future action

Appendix 2.2: Exemplar: BEd1, Semester 1 - Reflective log format

Date of entry

18 June 2003

Brief description of events

I got my Health assignment back yesterday and it was unsatisfactory. The tutor's comments on the sheet say that there wasn't enough evidence of reading when I wrote the rationale section and that I hadn't developed my diagram of the Health Promoting School enough. I was confused as I enjoyed the class and I thought I'd contributed well in the discussions. I felt really worried because I had to resit some assignments in Semester 1 while other work had been fine -

Am I able to cope with university work?

Key theme(s) emerging from event

- ~~Research for assignments~~ time management
- confidence

Why did the event happen this way?

(Including what strengths/areas for development did you demonstrate)

I decided to read back over my assignments for the year and I found that I seemed to do well in some but not in others; some tutors say I can use reading properly in my written work. Reading them all together, I can see a difference between the amount of effort I put into each one. If I'm honest, I wasn't really surprised when I didn't pass Health. Like Semester 1, I left everything to the last few weeks. I put a lot of time into the first assignment then I had to rush the others because I also had exams. The bibliography for the first assignment is always long, but the other work relies on notes from the classes. I think I really need to spread my reading more evenly over the assignments. I've decided to change the key theme - this is really about my time management.

Future action

- Draw up a timetable for assignments and stick rigidly to it.

Appendix 2.3: Master copy - Benchmark audit

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Area of development	Evaluation comments	Evidence/Date/Rating					
<p>Curriculum Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate sound knowledge of all aspects of curriculum content including 3-5 and 5-14? • Demonstrate knowledge and understanding to fulfil responsibilities in respect of literacy, numeracy, personal, social and health education and ICT from ages 3-12? • Demonstrate knowledge and understanding to enable you to plan coherent and progressive teaching programmes and justify what you teach? • Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of the curriculum and its development? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Education systems and professional responsibilities Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a broad and critical understanding of the principal features of the education system, educational policy and practice for 3-12? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Principles and perspectives Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw upon relevant principles, perspectives and theories to inform professional values and practices? • Demonstrate an understanding of research and its contribution to education? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			

Key:

- 1 Not developed
- 2 Some progress but generally not effective yet
- 3 Improving with room for further development
- 4 Developed and effective
- 5 Highly developed and effective

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Area of development	Evaluation comments	Evidence/Date/Rating					
<p>Teaching and learning Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate effectively using a variety of media to stimulate pupils and achieve objectives of lessons? Employ a range of teaching strategies and justify their approach? Set expectations and a pace of work which makes appropriate demands on pupils? Work effectively in cooperation with other professionals and adults in order to promote learning? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Classroom organisation and management Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise classes and lessons to ensure that all pupils are safe and productively employed when working individually, in groups or as a class? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Assessment of pupils Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and apply the principles of assessment, recording and reporting? Use the results of assessment to evaluate and improve teaching and to improve standards of attainment? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Professional reflection and communication Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access and critically evaluate professionally relevant literature? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			

Area of development	Evaluation comments	Evidence/Date/Rating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Construct and sustain reasoned and coherent arguments about educational matters and professional practices? ● Reflect on and act to improve the effectiveness of your own practice and contribute to the processes of curriculum development and your own continuing professional development? 		

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Area of development	Evaluation comments	Evidence/Date/Rating
<p>Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Value and demonstrate a commitment to social justice and inclusion? ● Value yourself as a growing professional by taking responsibility for your professional learning and development? ● Value, respect and show commitment to the communities in which you work? 		

Check you have completed all sections

Appendix 2.4: Exemplar: BEd3, Semester 1 - Curriculum section

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Area of development	Evaluation comments	Evidence/Date/Rating					
<p>Curriculum Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate sound knowledge of all aspects of curriculum content including 3-5 and 5-14? • Demonstrate knowledge and understanding to fulfil responsibilities in respect of literacy, numeracy, personal, social and health education and ICT from ages 3-12? • Demonstrate knowledge and understanding to enable you to plan coherent and progressive teaching programmes and justify what you teach? • Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of the curriculum and its development? 	<p>Read 3-5 again and discussed in tutorials but haven't used it in nursery yet.</p> <p>Now planned across most 5-14 curriculum areas and attended tutorials.</p> <p>Have now covered all these aspects in Faculty.</p> <p>Feel confident re Health and PSD. Numeracy and ICT fine. Less confident in literacy - had to resit year 2 language assignment.</p> <p>Planning generally fine but feel I still rely heavily on class teacher to guide me where to start and what to do.</p> <p>Getting there - learned a lot from tutor feedback in year 2.</p> <p>Concerned about what to do in 3-5.</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="991 483 1453 546"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> <p>Read 3-5 Oct 2003 See placement summary sheets for placement 1 (June 2002) and placement 2 (March 2003) BEd1 Health assignment feedback June 2002 BEd1 exam and assignment feedback BEd2 language assignment feedback June 2003 Placement 2 overall evaluation March 2003 and school report March 2003 Placement 2 visit 1 SES Jan 2003 See reflective log entries 30/10/03</p>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Education systems and professional responsibilities Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a broad and critical understanding of the principal features of the education system, educational policy and practice for 3-12? 		<table border="1" data-bbox="991 1648 1453 1711"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			

<p>Principles and perspectives Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Draw upon relevant principles, perspectives and theories to inform professional values and practices?● Demonstrate an understanding of research and its contribution to education?		
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Key:

- 1 Not developed
- 2 Some progress but generally not effective yet
- 3 Improving with room for further development
- 4 Developed and effective
- 5 Highly developed and effective

Appendix 2.5: Master copy: Key skills audit

Key skills	Evaluation comments	Evidence/Date/Rating					
<p>Communication and presentation Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Write clearly, correctly and concisely for a range of contexts (including report writing) and for different audiences? ● Make effective oral presentations? ● Use effective presentational aids and techniques? ● Use numerical information in communication? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Problem-solving and creativity Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use strategies for achieving realistic solutions to a range of problem types? ● Research and manage a wide range of information? ● Identify key issues and questions? ● Select and adopt effective methods of analysis including statistics? ● Recognise trends and cause-effect relationships in data? ● Draw logical conclusions? ● Use strategies for generating novel ideas? ● Develop novel ideas to successful conclusions? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Information technology Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use word processing? ● Make appropriate use of information technologies - internet, email? ● Use appropriate software eg spreadsheets? ● Use on-line bibliographical search facilities? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			

<p>Teamwork/collaboration Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support the achievement of consensus in a group? ● Collaborate in learning and share information? ● Show respect towards, and interest in, the views of others? ● Perform agreed tasks and roles? ● Coordinate and take leading roles in tasks? ● Assess own work and work of others? ● Negotiate in a professional context? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Project planning and organisation Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and implement formal task plans? ● Recognise entrepreneurship opportunities? ● Show consistency of commitment? ● Make decisions on a rational basis? ● Carry out a risk assessment? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			
<p>Personal development Do you-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manage time and meet deadlines? ● Work on own initiative? ● Reflect on, and record, own work and skills? ● Plan personal development? ● Learn independently? ● Develop interpersonal networks? ● Take an ethical approach in actions? ● Take account of environmental issues? 		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			

Appendix 2.6: Exemplar: BEd2, Semester 2 - Communication and presentation

Key skills	Evaluation comments	Evidence/Date/Rating					
<p>Communication and presentation Do you -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Write clearly, correctly and concisely for a range of contexts (including report writing) and for different audiences? ● Make effective oral presentations? ● Use effective presentational aids and techniques? ● Use numerical information in communication? 	<p>I have now expanded my written formats from mainly essays to include SE files and logs of learning.</p> <p>Feedback was positive. Still do not like to be put on the spot to present for my group.</p> <p>Progress in presenting where I know I can prepare beforehand. Realised over placement the importance of including more visual aids.</p> <p>Limited here to number work on placements - not really used this in coursework.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%; border: 2px solid black;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%;">5</td> </tr> </table> <p>BEd2 Placement 2 SE file and tutor summary sheet March 2003</p> <p>BEd2 Technology Log 2003</p> <p>Reflective log 2/11/02, 4/4/03</p> <p>Youth leader reference - summer job July 2002</p> <p>Placement 2 Mid-placement review Feb 2003</p>	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5			

Appendix 2.7: Master copy - Action plan

Areas for development	Priority	Outcomes/evidence	Action and timescale	Modification

Appendix 2.8: Exemplar: BEd 4, Semester 1 - Action plan

Areas for development	Priority	Outcomes/evidence	Action and timescale	Modification
<p>Benchmark 2.2 Classroom organisation and management</p>	2	<p>Improved management of placement 5 class Evidence -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● placement 5 evaluations ● placement 5 school report ● placement 5 SESs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek advice of placement 5 tutor and teacher ● Develop appropriate relationship with class over serial days - use 'Getting to Know You' activity and keep profile of pupils. 	
<p>Key skill B Problem-solving and creativity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research and manage a wide range of information ● Identify key issues and questions ● Select and adopt effective methods of analysis ● Recognise trends and cause-effect relationships in data ● Draw logical conclusions 	1	<p>Ability to research independently Ability to use research methods Evidence -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● log of discussions with major project tutor ● major project feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read 'Getting the Buggers to Behave' Oct - Dec 2003 (plus placement 5) ● Meet with tutor and agree time scale for project Oct 2003 ● Complete rationale and literature sections. Give to tutor for feedback end Dec 2003 ● Read 'Real World Researcher' C Robson end Dec 2003 	
<p>Key skill F Personal development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manage time and meet deadlines 	3	<p>Manage demands for year 4 Balance personal time and work commitment to placement Evidence -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● placement 5 evaluations ● reflective log entries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify deadlines and do plan for year Oct 2003 ● Establish major project timeline with tutor Oct 2003 ● Negotiate flexibility with work Dec 2003 ● Set a specific time each week for personal time Oct 2003 	

Appendix 3: ELF case study 3

Title of case study:	Programme Evaluation and Peer Observation
Author:	Lynsey Stuart
Institution:	Forth Valley College

Summary

The College has systematic mechanisms for gathering student feedback, which include three cross-college questionnaires undertaken at key points during the session. While these questionnaires are effective in gathering generic feedback it was felt more could be done to enhance these mechanisms at local level and to support teaching staff in the systematic evaluation of learning and teaching in a way that also engages the student. To this end, three toolkits have been developed centrally for Unit Evaluation, Focus Groups and Evaluation Through Peer Observation and these can be adapted to local needs. This case study looks at how Unit Evaluation and Evaluation Through Peer Observation were developed specifically for the HNC Applied Sciences.

A questionnaire in plain English covering generic programme issues and specific aspects of the core and specialist units was embedded in the normal scheduled class activity and the lecturer encouraged the students to reflect and be critical, and led them through the questions. For the pilot this took place during the third term of teaching.

This practice was complemented by the peer observation process, which also engaged the students by asking them to identify the key learning points of the observed lesson. In addition, students were asked to identify any positive aspects and to highlight areas for improvement. This was done as a workshop activity where students logged, grouped and reviewed comments on post-it notes.

The combined information provided feedback to curriculum teams, curricular managers, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and lecturers as well as encouraging students to reflect critically on their own learning.

Key outcomes for students:

- 1 learning to reflect critically on their learning and teaching experience
- 2 empowerment - they feel that their views are valued and they can see the effect of their input
- 3 increased awareness of quality systems and how they can impact positively on the student experience.

Students are able to use these outcomes to proactively address issues encountered and pursue solutions with confidence.

Description

Both evaluation using questionnaires at local level and peer observation are being encouraged across all curriculum areas at the College, but this particular case study focuses on a pilot with the HNC Applied Sciences students. Both of these mechanisms are embedded. The evaluation using questionnaires takes place in class and is led by the lecturer. The peer observations by their very nature must take place during normal teaching activity. Issues raised by both mechanisms are discussed at curriculum team and department meetings and are addressed at the Programme Board meeting, which has student representation present.

For this pilot, these activities took place during the third term of teaching. Both staff and students felt that it would be better earlier in the academic year as this would enable any pressing issues to be addressed to the benefit of the current cohort. This would have the additional positive spin-off of increasing students' confidence in these processes and the aim to promote real-time quality improvement is a departmental action for the coming session. Actions were agreed at the Programme Board with the aim of improving the student experience, and these were incorporated into the Curriculum Team 'Improving the Learner Experience' action plan. This plan has a grid that shows the source of agreed actions, and options include learner observations, feedback, team meetings and learners questionnaires.

The Head of Department played a key role in all aspects: adapting the paperwork to local needs, presenting the mechanisms to staff and preparing staff for participation as well as speaking directly to the students. Lecturing staff, the Programme Coordinator and the Department Administrator all worked together to implement, analyse and report on outcomes.

Implementation

The HNC Applied Sciences was developed as part of the Higher National modernisation programme and it was offered at the College for the first time in session 2005-06. For this reason it was decided to devise a local questionnaire that would look at the whole programme and include sections that focus on coherent groupings of units rather than survey each unit individually. In this way an initial assessment of the key aims of the programme could be made and general issues perceived throughout the session could be surveyed.

The lecturer responsible had a good rapport with the students and this was an important element of the approach. Students were encouraged not just to tick boxes but to reflect and give genuine responses. The importance of the feedback to planning, with improvements for next year's cohort, was made clear and it was acknowledged that students would like to impact on their own experience and be able to feed back earlier.

The implementation of peer observations was helped by the willingness of staff to participate. The workshop activity after the observations, which involved the students, was approached in a light-hearted way and so the students enjoyed it and had fun. This increased their level of engagement with the process.

The main drawback was the time demands that implementing this kind of innovative process poses and the need for the Head of Department to work closely with the observers and the observees as well as the students. This should be addressed as the process is rolled out and future observers and observees can be coached by colleagues who have already participated in the process. The students who progress to HND level will also be familiar with the process and better prepared to reflect critically on their learning and teaching experience.

Use of prompts/questions

The questionnaire surveyed academic learning, personal experiences and career aspirations. General programme questions gauged whether the students believed the entrance requirements were suitable, the workload manageable, and so on. The way the students felt about their experience was surveyed with questions on whether they enjoyed the programme and the variety of subjects; career aspirations were surveyed by asking if they believed the programme had prepared them for academic progression or work in the industry.

The Core Units section focused on the relevance of these units to the named programme and their importance in terms of career development, whereas the Core Skills section focused more on assessment issues and whether the students felt better able to apply these Core Skills.

Other questions gauged whether students were comfortable with the balance of theory and practice, focused specifically on the Graded Unit and gauged the exit plans of the students.

Taken as a whole, the range of questions used prompted students to reflect on all aspects of the ELF - personal experience, academic dimensions and career aspirations.

The key aspect of student involvement in the peer observation process consisted of them being asked to identify what they believed the main learning points of the observed lesson were. They then came together in a workshop to review the comments of the group as a whole. Their responses were compared with the aims of teaching staff, as stated in their preparation for the observation. This participation offers students a valuable insight into the learning and teaching process from the teaching point of view as well as raising awareness of other students' perceptions, and it further encourages reflection on their own learning.

The key practical outcomes of these complementary processes were identified at the Programme Board meeting and include an agreement from the Department to look at arranging smaller teaching groups, the introduction of the Core Skills of IT and Presentation in the first block rather than the second so that the skills have been learned and practised before they are required to be used as part of assessment. Another key outcome is the response to the students' desire to be able to feed back earlier and voice opinions so that they can have an impact on their own programme and not just subsequent sessions. Students have been encouraged to use the College's virtual learning environment to submit comments, or they can feed back using a pilot 'Your Views Count' postcard that will be gathered by the Department Administrator and referred to the Head of Department for analysis and consideration. Students can choose to submit anonymous feedback if they wish and the lecturing staff can also use this mechanism.

Support

The Head of Department discussed the implementation of peer observations with both the Depute Principal and the Associate Principal (Curriculum and Quality) from a strategic point of view, and worked with a Quality Adviser who gave hands-on advice and support on the practical aspects of implementation.

The Head of Department supported lecturers who participated in both the peer observations and the questionnaire. The support of the Department Administrator in analysing the data was also important as these local surveys can be very time-consuming to design and to analyse, and lecturing staff do not always have the necessary expertise.

Student questionnaires are continually under review as part of the ongoing quality improvement agenda, and their effectiveness can be judged by considering feedback from students and teaching staff as well as cross-college staff involved in analysis and support of quality processes. The peer observation process will likewise be subject to ongoing review and its effectiveness in terms of engaging the students can be assessed by their level of participation and the nature of their responses.

The effectiveness of these processes in terms of allowing the Department to make positive changes to improve the learner experience can be witnessed by the actions that have been agreed as a result. There have also been small changes made in the way the Department constructs its operational plan: issues and concerns are fed into the smaller Curriculum Team meetings and action plans, which in turn feed into the departmental plans.

Appendix 4: ELF case study 4

Title of case study:	PDP in Practice
Author:	Andrea Cameron
Institution:	University of Abertay, Dundee

Summary

This case study describes a lecturer's experience of providing tutorial support to students on placement who were required to keep a reflective log and submit this as part of the modular assessment scheme. FLQs were used in the tutorials as prompts to help the students to structure the log in what it was hoped would be a constructive manner. Students then translated material from their reflective logs into an on-line PDP tool being piloted by the University's career service. The case study outlines how tutorials operated in practice, the FLQs used and evaluates the lecturer's and students' experiences as well as considering adjustments made to the operation of the module for the future based on this experience.

Description

This project formed one of four being undertaken by the University of Abertay, Dundee as a consequence of receipt of Individualised Support for Learning through ePortfolios (ISLE) project funding. Each school within the University was invited to submit a type of student experience operating within the second semester of the university calendar which would allow for an on-line PDP to be piloted and evaluated by both students and lecturing staff.

It was decided within the School of Contemporary Sciences to place this within a module of learning for third-year Health Science students undertaking a work placement in a health promotion setting. The students were required to submit a 2,000-word reflective log worth 30 per cent of the assessment strategy for the module. As this was something they had not previously encountered, fortnightly tutorials were scheduled to enable the students to appropriately structure the log (it also allowed the tutor to check on the pertinence of learning occurring within the placement). The number of students on placement was small, and as they had always been a small, tight-knit cohort good relationships existed among the students, making it more comfortable for them to discuss/share placement experiences (at the student's discretion). The small student numbers also meant that within the tutorials all had the opportunity to contribute and receive guidance. FLQs were used to provide prompts for reflection and to help the students to give structure to their reflective log as well as to try and ensure that content was pertinent and focused on learning, in terms of knowledge, skills and potential personal growth.

Implementation

When invited to tender a project to utilise ISLE project funds it had been the author's original intention to integrate a laboratory skills matrix into an on-line PDP tool for use with Forensic Science undergraduates. However, sticking points proved to be the very tight deadline for getting the project up and running, and also being a non-member of the course team made it difficult to negotiate time to integrate this into the students' coursework. Therefore, in order to fulfil the ISLE project objectives for Phase 1 and allow the PDP tool to be piloted, it was decided to place this within a module of learning for third-year Health Science students undertaking a work placement in a health promotion setting. This choice made it easier for the tutor piloting the project as she was already a member of the course team, had many years of experience of using reflective logs in professional practice, and was already timetabled to do tutorials with the students to help them with their reflective logs and to get

feedback on what was occurring within the placements. Students were encouraged to schedule individual tutorials with the tutor if they required additional help to structure the reflective log. Once the students had started to structure their logs they were introduced to the ePDP tool being piloted by the Careers Service of the University within one of the tutorials. The students were encouraged to transfer the knowledge, skills and personal qualities that they were recognising as part of the placement (along with other experience that they had) into the on-line tool. This allowed them to generate a CV which they could add to as their academic career progressed, as well as formalising experience they were gaining through other things which they participated in outwith the 'classroom'.

Use of prompts/questions

At each tutorial, FLQs were used to provide prompts for reflection and to help the students to give structure to their reflective log, as well as to try and ensure that content was pertinent and focused on learning, in terms of knowledge, skills and potential personal growth. Students were also invited to appendix items to the log which could evidence skills/knowledge acquired, eg production of a leaflet/presentation.

Optional FLQs (ie not for sharing with the whole group unless the student particularly wants to share some element, of their choosing).

- What happened on placement this week?
- What tasks were you asked to do?
- What preparation was required to complete the tasks?
- What skills/knowledge were needed to complete the task?
- How did you feel before completing the task?
- How did you feel on completion of the task?
- In hindsight, what might you have done differently?
- How useful was the task to others/you?
- What has this added to your personal development?
- What were your expectations of a situation?
- Were your expectations realised? If yes, how? If no, how?
- What have you learned from being present at this situation?
- Other than tasks that you have completed this week, what activities have you observed on placement?
- What have you learned from observing these activities? Is this what you expected? If yes, why? If no, why? What has this added to your personal development?

The students, on introduction to the online PDP tool, were then encouraged to use their answers to these FLQs, in terms of knowledge, skills and experience gained, to answer the prompt questions within the tool. They could also copy and paste information from their reflective log into the boxes provided within the on-line PDP tool in terms of evidencing or providing examples of knowledge, skills or experience gained. The on-line tool once completed was able to use this information to generate a curriculum vitae for the student which they could add to as their academic career progressed, as well as allowing the student to formalise experience which they were gaining through other things they participated in outwith the 'classroom'.

Support

The project was initiated as a consequence of ISLE funding. However, the use of the reflective log, the tutorial support and the FLQs would still have occurred within this placement module for these students even if it had not formed part of the project. The structure of the student experience, however, did lend itself very well to the on-line PDP tool being piloted. This tool (and the IT support required for its construction and ongoing implementation) was supported by ISLE project funds. A member of staff from the Careers Service was also seconded onto the ISLE project team, and it was his role to work with lecturing staff to find opportunities for the tool to be piloted and to provide in-service training for the staff and students involved in using the tool. He was also responsible for evaluating the efficacy of the tool, based on staff and student experience, and feeding this back to the ISLE project team.

Evaluation of effectiveness

(The online PDP tool was evaluated separately as part of the ISLE project).

- The evaluation was limited by the small numbers of students participating, but it did allow the module tutors to revisit the assessment strategy and it did provide some valuable feedback for those piloting the ePDP tool.
- Some students did struggle to articulate their experiences in this manner, whilst others blossomed using this format. Some students were more open in their reflections than others. The reflective log allowed the students' enthusiasm for the placement to be captured and also allowed them to share with the module tutors, and where appropriate with their peers, the range of activities they had participated in as well as the skills and knowledge acquired. This then allowed for a shared learning experience. Use of the reflective log also allowed the student to see the 'journey' they had taken from the beginning to end of placement and for them to consider the process of learning along that journey, rather than focus on final outcomes. Of note was the fact that all students had positive experiences, probably enabling the process, but the occasional 'challenging' situation was also captured, and the learning which had occurred was also included.
- The tutor who was helping the students to construct their reflective logs has a professional requirement to keep a reflective portfolio and had eight years of experience in helping student nurses to write reflective portfolios, so this made the task of providing tutorial support for these students easier in terms of keeping them focused on relevant and pertinent information to include.
- The fact that the students were in their third year of academia was both a positive and a negative - the positive being their cohesiveness as a group and their ability to express themselves in the classroom and in written work; the negative being that for those students who did struggle with the concept, if it had been something they had been doing from the first year then this may have made the task easier.

- Use of a word limit on the log was useful as it ensured that the students remained focused. However, in hindsight, because of the amount of witnessed effort that the students put into this assessment, the tariff in terms of academic credit has been increased to 50 per cent of the total module mark. It is also hoped that for the students this will imply that this type of work is viewed as valued. It was noted that for one student (academically able and mature) who did struggle with this piece of work, she achieved a lower grade than other pieces of work which she has produced; however, she was able to lift her overall mark for the module with the other units of assessment. Therefore tutorial staff may need to be mindful of the credit awarded to this type of work.

Appendix 5: ELF case study 5

Title of case study:	Reflective Questionnaire: A Success Story
Author:	Isabelle Pottinger (based on work carried out by Isabelle Pottinger and Dr Scott Arthur)
Institution:	Heriot-Watt University

Summary

This is a case study reporting on our considerable success at using a reflective questionnaire with first-year civil engineering students, where the results from the questionnaire have both provided an agenda for mentor meetings and formed part of the data set used to fine tune the curriculum.

Description

Early in term 2, first-year civil engineering students are asked to complete a reflective questionnaire. Non-personal information given by these students is collated, converted to graphical/pictorial format and this overview presented to the students at the earliest opportunity. This collated information also becomes part of the data set used to monitor and evaluate the modules/programme of study.

In addition, each student takes a copy of their completed questionnaire with them to the next scheduled one-to-one meeting with their mentor (ie the academic with responsibility for pastoral support for that student). The completed questionnaire acts as an agenda for this meeting, enabling the mentor to focus on that student's individual needs.

Notes

- 1 The presentation of collated responses is frequently a source of reassurance to many students. Time and again they tell us that they are relieved and reassured that they are not alone in their concerns; that they now realise that the challenges they face in their studies are shared by others in the class.
- 2 The practice described is restricted to first-year Civil Engineering. However, a modified version of the questionnaire is also used with third-year civil engineering students, deciding whether to study for BEng or MEng. Other disciplines in the School of the Built Environment use questionnaires that have been derived from the example given here.
- 3 The practice, managed between the first-year Coordinator and me, is integrated with the term 2 mentoring process in first-year Civil Engineering and so needed buy-in from all relevant members of staff in order to be effective.
- 4 The practice is not assessed.
- 5 The PDP framework/process currently being delivered in Civil Engineering, part of the School of the Built Environment, has been built on the success of a range of professional development initiatives developed and delivered over many years. The practice described in this case study is one of the stable elements of that programme.

- 6 During term 1, those first-year civil engineering students perceived as being 'at risk' - typically due to poor attendance or poor grades in class tests - are invited to a meeting and asked to complete this same questionnaire. On a one-to-one basis, staff members discuss with them their responses and explore any issues uncovered. This proactive, early intervention enables misunderstandings/misapprehensions to be cleared up promptly or students referred on for more specialist help, as appropriate.

Appendix 5.1: First-year BEng/MEng Civil Engineering

Name.....

The aim of this activity is to enable you to think about:

- i your attendance and performance so far this academic year
 - ii how you intend to plan and manage the remainder of this year's academic work such that you achieve your academic objectives
 - iii how you might strike a balance between your academic work and other interests in your life
- Which subjects do you like/feel you are good at?

 - Which subjects do you not like/feel you are less good at?

 - Are the marks/grades you have scored so far an accurate measure of your ability?

 - If not, why not?

 - Do you feel that there is any link between these grades/scores and your attendance record?
Please explain your answer.

 - List the things that interest you/matter to you this academic year, eg academic study, paid work, sport, increased freedom to set your own priorities, chance to live away from home, opportunity to manage a budget, chance to make and spend time with new friends etc.

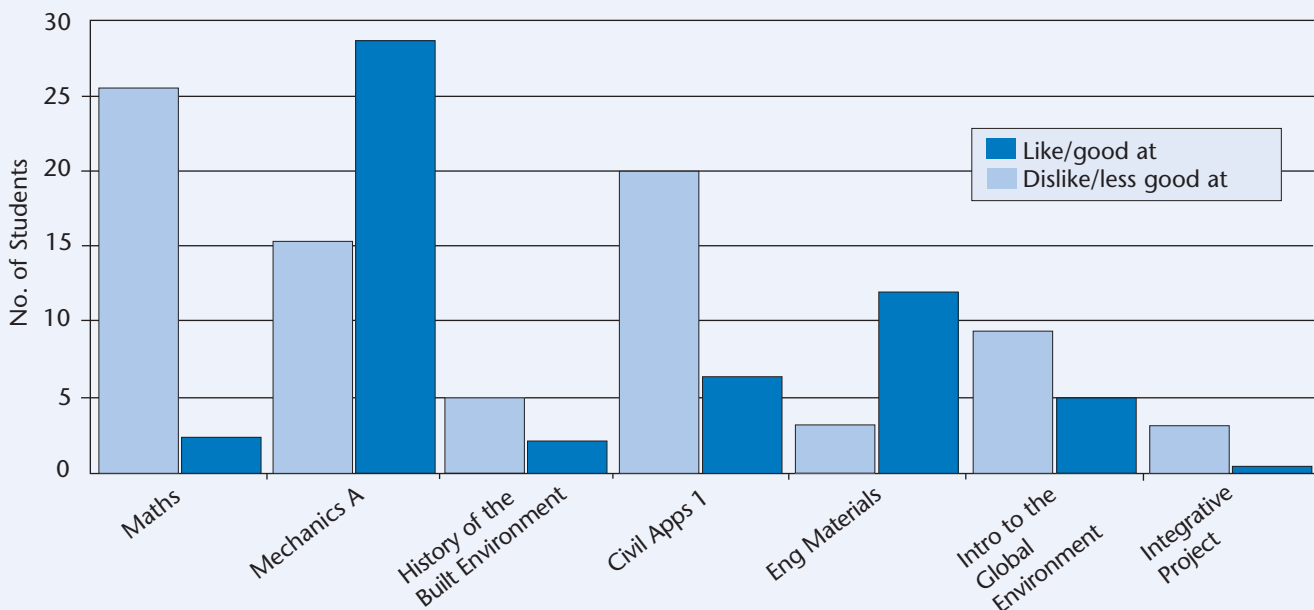
- Is there a conflict between the time and effort needed to achieve academic success and your other interests? Please explain your answer.
- If so, how might you resolve that conflict?
- OK, we are keen to provide help and guidance to enable you to make sense of the parts of your course you find difficult. Which subjects would you like help with and what sort of help would you find most useful?
- In return, what would be your contribution to such a learning arrangement? (You might agree to work on additional tutorial examples, for instance, or to keep up to date with coursework. Perhaps you can think of other examples that are more appropriate for you.)
- And if you don't want that, would you like to talk over with us (in private) the things that really do matter to you so that we can help you to make the life choices that are right for you? Perhaps that means a different study course either at this institution or somewhere else, perhaps it means paid work, travel, sport etc. You are here today because you want to succeed. Let us help you make those choices - whatever they may be - let us help you succeed!

Appendix 5.2 - PowerPoint presentation



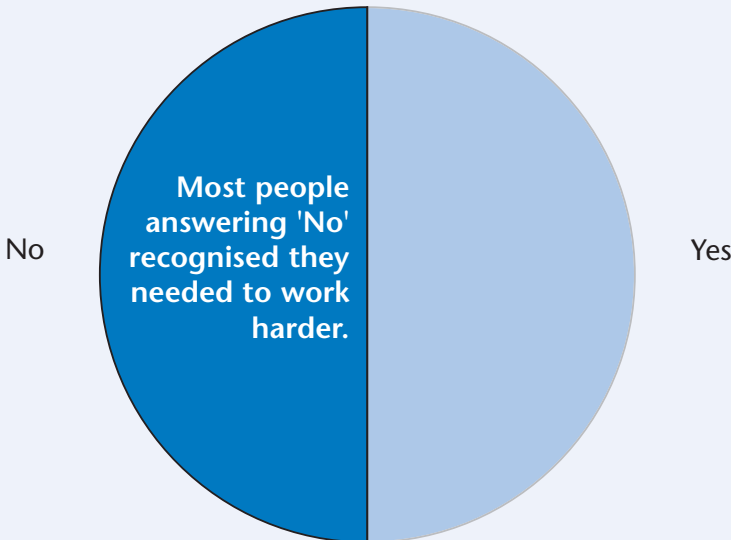
1st year Civil Engineering

Responses to 2005 questionnaire (Class size = 55)

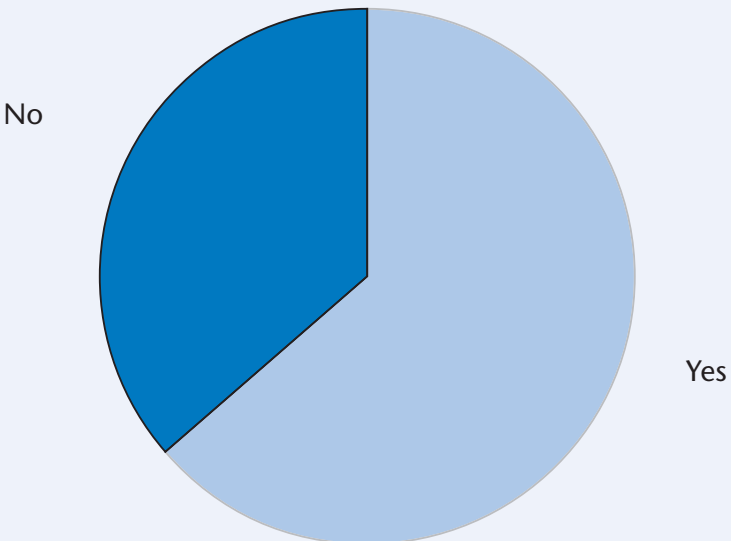




Are your grades an accurate measure of your ability?

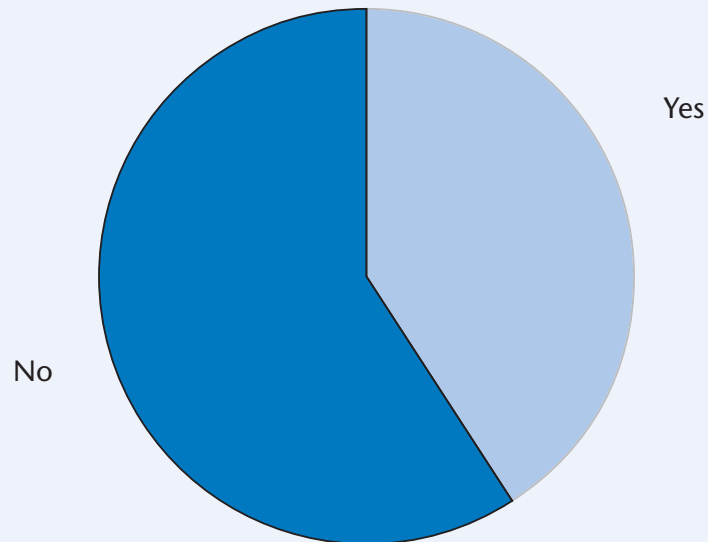


Is there a link between your attendance and grades?

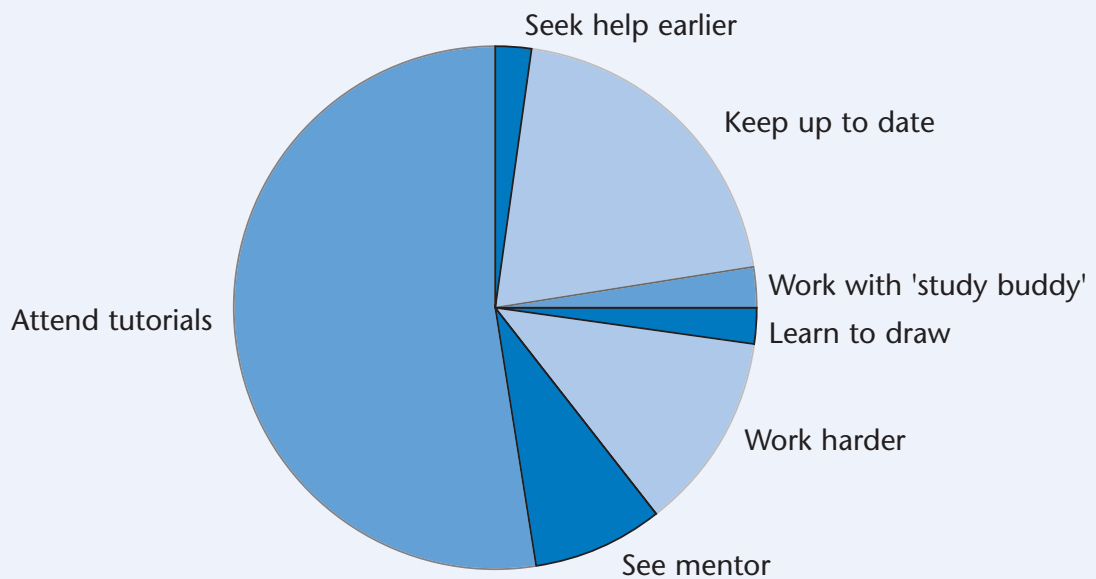




Do the 'things that matter' to you conflict with your studies?

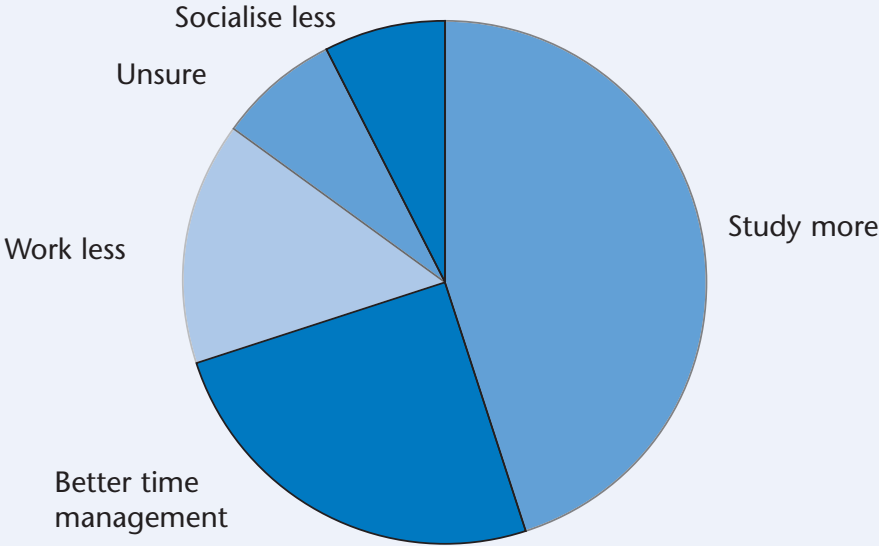


Your contribution

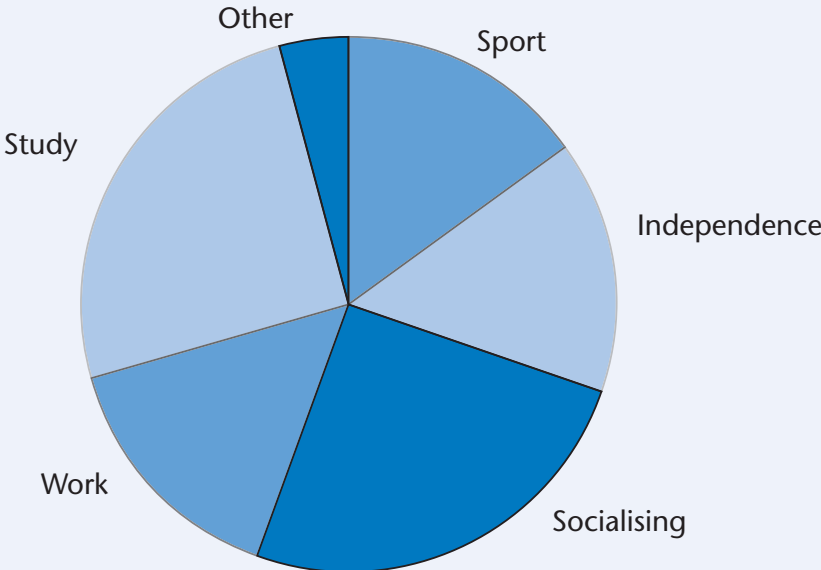




What could you/we do to help improve your grades?



Things that matter to you

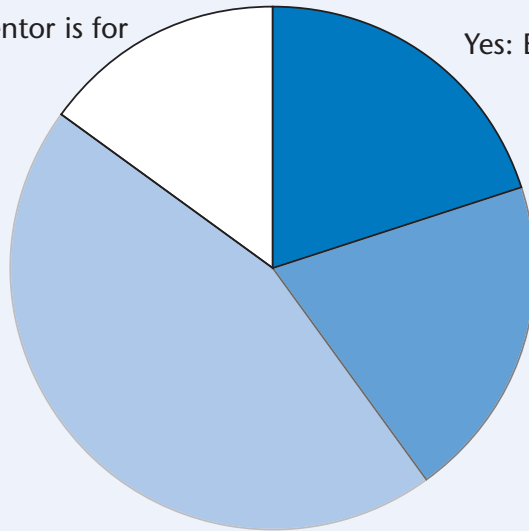




Do you need help/support from the School of the Built Environment?

Yes: That is what my mentor is for

Yes: Better notes



Yes: More 1-2-1 help

Yes: More worked examples

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