

Employability

Effective learning and employability

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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 processes in 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 the improvement of the student experience in HE as a targetting the main objective. 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 benefited from close links with the programme of Enhancement Themes, in particular with the Employability theme. The link has underpinned the publication of this booklet, which has a particular focus on the links between PDP/ELF and Employability.

I am particularly pleased to welcome this publication and the synergy it exhibits between the Enhancement Themes and the overall enhancement agenda. I am very grateful to both the members of the JWG and the Employability Enhancement Theme Steering Committee for their 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 focused learner questions, 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 student's time in HE. Further development and refinement of FLQs is being continued in the next phase of the JWG's work, the results of which will be presented in the second half of 2006.

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 the potential to help create linkages between PDP-like processes across the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework. All students, whatever 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 assist to facilitate cross-sectoral working.

The ELF is not designed to replace institutions' existing plans for PDP, nor should it be considered a prescriptive model. It is designed to help institutions think about how their own PDP strategies might be developed. It 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 the enhancement of the student learning experience.

As part of its overall strategy for its work, the Steering Committee for the Employability Enhancement Theme identified that it would be important to determine how PDP and the ELF could be developed to help students to enhance their employability. The Steering Committee asked the JWG to take forward this work. This publication forms the outcome of that work.

The Centre for Recording Achievement has also conducted work on PDP and employability. This will result in the publication of *PDP and Employability* which will form part of the Higher Education Academy Learning and Teaching Series. This may also be of interest to readers.

I hope this document is of help to you and your institution and helps to stimulate developments between PDP, effective learning and employability. 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/ELF and how they relate to employability.

David Ross

Executive summary

This report summarises the outcomes of a project which explored several facets of the potential linkages between effective learning and employability. The work was undertaken for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Scotland under the guidance of a QAA Scotland/ Universities Scotland Joint Working Group on Implementing Student Personal Development Planning (PDP) in Scotland.

Earlier, that Group had developed a model for effective learning, the Effective Learning Framework (ELF), based upon students using prompts (focused learner questions (FLQs)) to inform their learning self-audit and the consequential development of their plans for learning. The model focused upon the complex interactions for students between three domains (academic, personal, career).

This project explored ways in which that approach could help learners (and others) to identify and reflect on employability needs and skills, and relate those to personal aspirations, individual experiences, preferences and skills.

The topic was informed by discussions with several graduate recruiters and respondents from seven professional and statutory bodies (PSBs). Further various illustrative examples of FLQs were contributed at several focus groups involving higher education (HE) staff and students. Finally, selective summaries are included of findings from other studies such as the outputs in support of the Employability Enhancement Theme and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)-funded Enhancing Student Employability Coordination Team (ESECT) project (now overseen by the Higher Education Academy).

The principal conclusions are:

- graduate recruiters believe that student PDP would help to prepare students for employability, particularly if the reflective self-audit of learning experiences is used to shape and structure purposeful development activities
- graduate recruiters look at a wide range of formal and informal learning experiences
- PSBs tend to interpret PDP as professional development planning, or as the precursor to the latter. Variation in practices exists within the sample of PSBs, largely due to differences in statutory enablement in relation to student registration and to the respective stage of evolution of the policies governing accreditation and continuing professional development (CPD)
- that said, all of the PSBs consulted were supportive of the merits of student PDP as a vital preparation for future professional development planning
- staff and students found the task of drafting FLQs stimulating and revealing
- the substantial and growing literature on employability-related initiatives reports on a wide range of approaches and provides a rich array of situated information. Discussions with respondents suggested that this often readily available literature is an underused resource.

Introduction

Self-reflection, which lies at the heart of student PDP, is a demanding higher-order skill. Evidence from several projects reporting upon the use of student PDP demonstrates that students often find it difficult to openly share self-reflections of their learning experiences, especially when these involve sensitive personal and/or academic issues. While acknowledging the potential hesitancy that students might have, graduate recruiters saw benefits in such open sharing, provided it takes place within an appropriate informed and supportive structure and environment. That could involve peers, ie student-student, or tutors/advisers or indeed others (parents, mentors etc). A repeated message from those consulted in this project is that critical self-reflection can be a challenging experience. It is important to maintain an overarching ethos of the growth and development of the reflector and to ensure that the activity takes place within a caring and supportive environment.

While the goal may be to encourage continuous self-reflection and PDP, the likelihood is that it will often occur in an intermittent or episodic manner, eg at transition points or due to particular stimuli or incidents. A range of illustrative FLQs are offered which relate both to the three domains of the ELF model and the various interfaces, and also to various situations and events such as transition points or specific stimuli. The focus groups also generated examples of discipline-specific FLQs and some illustrations are included.

The intentions of the effective learning approach to employability resonate with the view expressed by Harvey (2005) '...the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner. Employment is a by-product of this enabling process.' Young (2005) concluded that this perspective was widely shared across the Scottish HE sector.

There is substantial support for the potential offered by engaging students in regular reflection upon their formal and informal learning experiences, and from considering these in relation to the academic, personal and career domains. The challenge remains translating potential into reality by gaining widespread enthusiastic commitment (from students, staff and institutions) to the associated processes and practices.

The hope is that the rich array of experiences, materials and suggestions presented in this report are both of direct utility to readers and act as a catalyst for reflective evaluation of approaches, practices and perceptions. Related work undertaken by the Centre for Recording Achievement for the Higher Education Academy has resulted in the following publication, which might also be of interest to readers: Ward, R *et al* *PDP and employability: putting policy into practice (Learning and Employability Series)*, York, The Higher Education Academy (in press).

This report summarises the outcomes of a project which explored several facets of the potential linkages between effective learning and employability. It was undertaken for QAA Scotland under the guidance of a QAA Scotland/Universities Scotland Joint Working Group on Implementing Student PDP in Scotland.

That Group developed a model, the ELF, which was broadly supported by the Scottish HE sector in a consultation which concluded in February 2005. The key features of this self-review approach to effective student learning are outlined in Figure 1.



Figure 1: The Effective Learning Framework

The model was envisaged as providing a holistic framing for students and staff to reflect upon, and develop plans for, effective learning, and to relate these, as appropriate, to academic, personal and/or career aspirations, considerations and expectations. Such explorations would be enabled by the use of FLQs.

The current project is operating in tandem with a closely-linked one on other aspects of the development and articulation of an effective learning approach to student PDP. That work is reported on separately in *Using focused learner questions in personal development planning to support effective learning* (QAA, 2006).

This project, which links with work undertaken as part of the Employability Enhancement Theme, explores ways in which an effective learning approach could help learners to identify and reflect on employability needs and skills, and how these learning interactions might increase learner motivation and the value attached to participation in PDP.

Four strands of work are summarised in this report, namely:

- discussions with several individuals in companies and organisations who had responsibility for, and/or interest in, graduate recruitment
- discussions with representatives of several PSBs
- illustrative FLQs derived from focus groups of staff and students
- examination of related materials generated by various employability projects and publications, including outputs from the Employability Enhancement Theme.

This resource is aimed at several audiences, including students. As far as possible, the material has been shaped in a way that should aid usage, not an easy task given the diversity of uses and needs. It is recognised that this will vary depending upon factors such as context and experience. Some layering, or sequencing, has been attempted within illustrative FLQs, but individual users should select and order items in ways which meet their needs, expectations, situations, experience and preferences.

The other principal anticipated users are a range of staff in higher education institutions (HEIs), senior managers in HEIs, and others, including employers and recruiters, who are interested in ways of using a focus upon effective learning as a means of progressing various dimensions of the theme of employability.

At the core of student PDP are the concepts of self-audit of the match between learning, aspirations, values and motivations, and the recurrent process of critical self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. These are high-order and demanding skills. They involve a considerable measure of well-grounded self-confidence on the part of the individual undertaking the self-reflection. That, in turn, can be aided when the process takes place within an environment (institutional, departmental, peer-based or residential-based) which is supportive, encouraging and developmental-orientated. One graduate recruiter consulted neatly summarised the situation: 'student PDP is an excellent thing provided it is properly supported. If not it could be counterproductive, even demotivational.'

Suggestions from graduate recruiters

Seven interviews were held with graduate recruiters. Unanimously these were supportive of the potential benefits that could accrue from students adopting an organised and structured reflective and developmental approach to their learning.

The seven respondents spanned a range of employment opportunities. Generally, all of their organisations had significant annual levels of graduate recruitment.

Here, the rich discussions are summarised under three sub-headings, namely:

- a key learning points
- b views on student PDP
- c employability advice.

a Key learning points

- Graduate recruiters look for rounded, self-aware people who are effective communicators, have had interesting learning experiences, and can demonstrate effective learning and desirable work-related attitudes and aptitudes.
- They do not expect or wish HE to be primarily focused upon employability, but they do expect graduates to be capable of articulating and applying the benefits of their learning experiences.
- They consider both formal and more informal learning experiences, especially where the latter provide crucial evidence of the development of 'soft' skills such as teamworking, negotiation, handling people, effective communication, client/customer orientation and so forth.
- Even when recruitment is to a professional role, alternative developmental pathways and opportunities are often possible, so applicants should consider and investigate the sort of roles or pathways which they think are most suited to their skills, preferences and values.
- Investigate the requirements and nature of the career/careers that are of interest. Think how your formal and informal education can help you to prepare for that career. When applying, carefully demonstrate your skills and strengths: research the opportunity and the company/organisation.

b Views on student PDP

Many organisations require new graduate entrants to undertake formal PDP, performance development linked to training. Graduate recruiters thought student PDP should be good both as a preparation for that recruitment but, more importantly, to foster motivation, self-awareness and self-esteem. Their caveat was that student PDP must be taken seriously and appropriately supported. Indeed, one respondent wished it had been available when she had been a student in the 1990s.

PDP was envisaged as helping to set the scene in terms of employment options and criteria and the link to active learning, formal and informal, during studies in HE. The principal benefits were expected to accrue from helping students to understand themselves, their values and aspirations, and how these could influence their choice of employment or further study and developing skills in how to articulate their learning experiences.

One respondent questioned whether self-audit alone would be sufficient, suggesting that there may be a need for 360-degree feedback, ie input from others, especially on competence in interpersonal skills. Indeed, more generally it was argued that there could be substantial benefits from dialogues to inform and contextualise self-audit.

It was further argued that attention should be paid to ways of ensuring some consistency of support for the process of student PDP. Here a light touch was sought to avoid staff viewing the task as burdensome. That could be eased by careful meshing into other processes and practices, to avoid unnecessary duplication.

The focus should be upon prompting and promoting effective discussion and reflection. Recruiters also urged effective integration of careers service staff into the process of student PDP and, more generally, wider student uptake of their services and expertise. One further piece of introductory advice was that student PDP should be about taking a considered approach.

c Employability advice

The suggestions and advice offered to students by the sample of graduate recruiters can be grouped under three broad headings:

- exploration
- analysis, reflection and development
- investigation, preparation and presentation.

Exploration

Here the advice to students covered:

'At an early stage, often before choosing a degree programme, find out as much as you can about the career/careers you are interested in. What does that career require in terms of qualifications for entry? What does it entail in terms of values, behaviour, type of work and opportunities for progression and development?'

In researching careers that are of interest, graduate recruiters urged students to talk to people in that job and, if possible, to gain first-hand experience through work-shadowing or related, even unpaid, vocational attachment/internship.

Progressing students should revisit this exploration during their studies both to update themselves on any changes that might affect them and also to check that their views remain substantially unaltered about the suitability of that potential career for them.

Most careers make specific demands upon practitioners. It is important to understand what these are and check that you would be comfortable doing them recurrently. Where a student does not have a firm view about a preferred career prior to entering HE, the exploration stage involves investigating, at some juncture during their studies, what options are open to them. Since many jobs do not demand a degree in a specific discipline, the potential list is sizeable. Here ancillary questions might include preferences in terms of geographical location, size of organisation, or employment sector. Such searches are facilitated by effective use of the resources available in the careers service of the institution, in addition to electronic searches of websites and other, nowadays often on-line, sources of information.

A second piece of advice was: 'be focused about what you want to do'. Effective exploration will enable that focusing.

Analysis, reflection and development

Graduate recruiters do not expect every student to have resolved their career choice before entering HE. On the contrary, the view was expressed that for many students the early months in HE may be dominated by settling into HE, making new friends and meeting new challenges. However, even during that phase, students were encouraged to reflect on their experiences (academic, personal, extracurricular) to gain an understanding of their skills, strengths, preferences and values and use that information to plan their development. One suggestion was for a student to divide their learning experiences into strands and then relate these to what they might do as a career.

More generally, students should:

- reflect on all aspects (formal and informal) of their learning experiences. What has been learned? What skills have been developed? How could that be demonstrated to others, such as a potential employer?

Here a student might ask:

- How do I learn? What techniques do I use? What is my preferred style of learning?
- What do I find difficult to do? Could that affect my career?
- Reflecting on the past semester, what have been the main themes in the feedback that I have received? What have I done with it?
- How much personal risk am I prepared to take trying out new experiences/approaches to projects or arrangements or work placements?
- Looking at my log/PDP portfolio in terms of quality of self-audit and of dialogue with tutors and peers, is it effective? Is it improving? What criteria did I use to make that judgement?
- What should come naturally to me?

A common theme in the comments from graduate recruiters was the high degree of competition for posts and the need for students to be able to articulate their strengths, evidence their learning from experience as well as their achievements, and show that experience and achievement are broadly based. To further these goals, students were urged to view sporting activities, voluntary activities and part-time employment as part of their learning experiences and to be able to demonstrate what they learned from such engagement.

Investigation, preparation and presentation

Progressively, students were encouraged to sharpen their investigation of specific employment opportunities and to connect that information closely to their self-audit and development activities.

Questions that might inform self-reflection include the following:

- What are my success criteria?
- What kind of feedback do I like to receive?
- How do I make the most of a situation and overcome challenges?
- Do I learn from experience and if necessary do things differently next time?
- Should I undertake a work placement as an internship or job-shadowing? If so, how can I achieve that goal, ie what needs to be done?

As the employment search progressively sharpens, helpful questions can be:

- What sort of things do I like to do? For example, do I prefer to work with ideas or details? Analysts handle details. So would the role of an analyst suit me?
- In a similar vein, many professional careers offer a variety of pathways. If I am interested in engineering, for example, is it a preference for hands-on work or design?

Investigation of and reflection upon a range of factors and features could prove helpful. A bundle of related questions are:

- What skills am I good at, and not so good at?
- What do I enjoy and dislike? What is important to me in a job (eg salary, challenge, time, location) and what is not so important?
- What career paths are available in the organisation? Which would I prefer and why?

Distilling the experience, the graduate recruiters commented that:

- 'Common weaknesses in applicants are that they describe rather than explain, analyse or elaborate. Good communicational skills often distinguish attractive from disappointing applicants.'

- 'Attitude is also important. A great attitude can outweigh minor differences in skill proficiency.'
- 'Demonstrating skills and learning from experiences is vital.'
- 'In a commercial organisation it is important to have a sense of, and sympathy with, commercial awareness.'
- 'Almost invariably you will need to work with others effectively, so it is important that you can show proficiency in interpersonal skills.'
- 'Show an understanding of the role and a strong desire to work for the organisation.'
- 'We want people with initiative, self-awareness of the working environment, an ability to learn from feedback, a commitment to improvement and an ability to be a team player.'
- 'Look at the website of the organisation. Many have lots of hints and tips for applicants.'
- 'Think deeply about how you can demonstrate the skills needed for the role.'

Finally, it follows from the foregoing points that students can actively help themselves to prepare for potential employment by making the most of the student PDP process of self-audit and developmental planning, and by seeking through their formal studies and related learning experiences opportunities to develop skills and expertise which can be of benefit in their subsequent career(s).

Comments from professional and statutory bodies

Views were sought from seven PSBs. Overwhelmingly they related student PDP either closely or, in some cases, more generally to their existing or emerging expectations for CPD by their members/registered practitioners. Thus PSBs generally saw student PDP as actual or potential preparation for subsequent processes of professional development planning. In some cases these were formally integrated, in other instances the links were looser or embryonic.

All of the PSBs operated accreditation procedures which recognised specific HE programmes as a means of trainee entry into that profession. All were strongly supportive of the desirability of effective learning and of the potential benefits of structured student reflection, self-review and planned learning. Indeed, one PSB had developed materials to aid these processes, and made them available to all of the relevant departments in HEIs.

At present, only a minority of the PSBs formally expected student PDP as a requirement for the purposes of accrediting programmes, but the majority considered that it would be seen as illustrating good practice in student support and learning.

One body, the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), has produced detailed materials to support student PDP in HE (see below). Others, such as NHS Education for Scotland (NES), the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) expect alignment to the procedures for trainees.

Brief summaries of key points from the conversations with each of the PSBs are provided below.

1 Royal Society of Chemistry

The RSC has developed materials to support student PDP in chemistry departments. Separate handbooks have been made available for use with undergraduates and with postgraduates. Both are described as a Skills Record. The undergraduate document is 47 pages in length, while the postgraduate one contains 35 pages.

In essence, students are expected to follow a cycle of skills recording and development, and to complete a skills profile based on a skills audit. In the case of undergraduates these activities should occur on three occasions: during the first semester; at the midway point of their studies; and at the end of them.

In the Undergraduate Skills Record the ratings used are:

- A I can use this skill very well
- B I can use this skill well, but some improvements could be made
- C I need to improve this skill

D I need to put in considerable work to develop this skill

E I have not had the opportunity to develop this skill.

The topics covered are:

- planning and organisation
- study skills
- handling information
- communication skills
- working with others
- scientific/practical skills
- improving learning and performance
- information communication technology skills
- problem solving.

There are then sections for feedback at the three checkpoints on the skills audit and a section dealing with project work.

The postgraduate booklet resembles the undergraduate one. Here the checkpoints are within the first few months, after five-16 months and finally after 17-28 months of commencing PhD research.

A section on project-specific skills features early in the Postgraduate Skills Record, as does one on postgraduate induction. These precede the section on personal data and the PhD progress plan. The skills audit covers handling information, communication skills, improving learning and performance, planning and organisation, working with others, and scientific skills. The rating scale is numerical with '4' representing 'very well' and '1' representing 'needs considerable attention'. There is also a not-applicable category. The document also includes lists of action and positive words that students might use in their profile.

The postgraduate document refers students to the RSC's CPD framework and membership structure, as well as offering advice. Similarly, the undergraduate document outlines the benefits of Affiliate Student Membership of the RSC, in addition to offering some employability advice.

These are detailed and structured resources. It is acknowledged that it can be difficult to capture the wholehearted engagement of all students, even when the documents are made available electronically.

These materials have attracted interest from overseas as other countries seek to support and progress skills agendas.

2 Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

CPD is a compulsory requirement for practising pharmacists. Students undertaking the MPharm course in the UK must successfully pass pharmacy practice. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) takes the view that student PDP should provide vital preparation for the subsequent professional requirements which practitioners will be expected to satisfy. Thus they view student PDP as good practice in MPharm programmes and progressively are expecting to see that when an accreditation takes place. Generally they would prefer the approach to PDP to resemble that for CPD in pharmacy, ie not to be too generic.

Currently the RPSGB does not have legislative authority in relation to student members, but a review of healthcare regulation is in progress which may lead to changes such as the introduction of student registration, ie a much more formalised 'traineeship' model.

3 Institution of Mechanical Engineers

The Institution wholeheartedly supports the concept of student PDP. Currently, students taking a year out in industry will be encouraged to undertake a monitored PDP linked to the five core competences as outlined in the relevant UK specification of the Engineering Council UK.

Upon graduation, the initial phase of PDP for a practising mechanical engineer also entails monitored progress towards reaching a particular standard in each of the specified core competences. This output standard, although not time served, typically means that it takes around four years to achieve Chartered Engineer status and three years to achieve Incorporated Engineer status.

This structure is reflected in university courses which primarily pursue the academic components of the output competences and prepare students for their professional role.

The Institution views student PDP as good practice. It also fits closely with the long-established processes of CPD expected of practising mechanical engineers. The Institution has enhanced systems and support to more effectively facilitate that CPD.

The Engineering Council UK is currently undertaking an exploratory project into possible future requirements for some form of revalidation of professional status. If that transpires it would impact upon detailed expectations for CPD.

4 The Law Society of Scotland

The Society is broadly supportive, although it does not presently have a formal policy on PDP or portfolio learning.

The Glasgow Graduate School of Law is undertaking an initiative involving students maintaining a portfolio which could be carried forward into traineeship. The Society is in support of this project.

If any strengthening occurred in the links between the undergraduate law degree, the diploma and traineeship, PDP might prove an important means of enabling the connectivity.

These and related matters are the subject of debate within the Society.

5 NHS Education for Scotland

NES designs, commissions, quality assures and, where appropriate, provides education and lifelong learning for the NHS Scotland workforce. The Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Directorate acts as the agent in Scotland of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the PSB for nurses and midwives. HEIs providing degrees/diplomas in nursing and midwifery are expected to implement, operate and support student PDP.

The clear view was expressed that from a pre-registration perspective there are academic and other benefits for students in undertaking PDP, especially as nurses and midwives can only renew their triennial registration by confirming the achievement of the professional requirements through a personal portfolio.

The materials produced by the NMC set standards for the attainment of professional outcomes and competences. Generally, pre-registration students are expected to maintain a portfolio of reflective experiences. Also, they must show attainment of the professional outcomes and competences at certain points throughout the programme, although that may be done separately from the PDP portfolio.

As the agent of the NMC in Scotland, NES quality assures all statutory nursing and midwifery programmes, including the annual monitoring of those HEIs delivering pre-registration programmes and statutory post-registration programmes.

6 Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland

ICAS accredits undergraduate degrees in accountancy. It accepts the relevant *Subject benchmark statement* published by QAA and expects HEIs to meet it. That captures statements about the development of skills. ICAS does not explicitly look at the provisions for PDP in the accreditation process, but would view it as of potential benefit in assisting students to self-audit and reflect upon their learning and the development of required skills.

When individuals enter traineeship they formally become involved with ICAS. At this juncture trainees are required to maintain an achievement log which has competency targets and entails regular review and approval by a mentor. Once qualified they are expected to undertake CPD which involves learning targets and associated learning plans.

Feedback from mentors and employers of trainees suggests that not all entrants, at commencement, meet the expected competency standards in 'softer' skills such as effective listening.

ICAS undertakes an annual check of logbooks of trainees.

Only about half of graduates from Scottish HEIs with accountancy degrees go into chartered accountancy training with a registered employer (and hence within the provenance of ICAS). Many others continue professional training with other bodies.

International discussions are taking place over standards for the CPD of practising professionals. Generally the UK and Ireland favour an output approach, while others prefer an input (time based) one.

7 Royal Institute of British Architects

Student PDP was seen as integral to the philosophy of reflective professional development which underpins education, training and development in architecture. Architecture degrees are oriented to developing effective, reflective practitioners.

Students work in practices during their studies, and active reflective development is an integral component of those structured experiences. To this end, students complete a Professional Experience and Development Record (PEDR) by accessing a dedicated website, which costs them £25 per year.

The PEDR of experience in practice has four sections, each with specific questions, and must be completed quarterly. Three individuals each have clear responsibilities for the PEDR, namely the student, their professional studies adviser and the relevant office mentor/supervisor. The student drives the process.

The PEDR also offers advice to students and employers. Students can see sample records, as well as tips on how to complete the records. Illustrative questions include:

- 'What do you think you have learned from your professional experience over the last three months?'
- 'How would you evaluate your performance?'
- 'What additional skills do you feel you need to develop to achieve the above?'

Students can download their final copy and get it signed by their mentor and professional adviser.

The perception is that the majority of students take the PEDR seriously and find it beneficial.

The expectation is that students should make a cognitive map of their professional development across the RIBA criteria as they progressively work towards Part III and satisfy standards of practice management. In that process they should identify their strengths and weaknesses and address the latter.

In summary, the modern approach in architecture to professional experience and development is about students using course materials in the first degree to further learn via practice, find out about projects and how these influence the practice of architects.

RIBA favours an integrated approach to PDP/CPD, while recognising that schools of architecture differ substantially in the way this is handled.

Illustrative employability-oriented focused learner questions

These illustrative FLQs were written by HE staff and students. Most are intended for use by students, but some are designed for staff, institutional managers and external agencies. They cover a range of contexts, including early stages in HE, moving on from HE, the different interfaces in the Effective Learning Framework and the support of student PDP.

They are broadly grouped under the following headings:

- a framing and preparatory questions for students to ask themselves
- b questions for nursing students
- c questions for students taking a work experience module
- d questions for students about to leave HE
- e questions which bridge domains, eg academic/career, career/personal
- f questions for career advisers to ask students
- g questions for academic staff to use with students
- h questions for institutional managers
- i questions for external agencies and organisations, including PSBs.

a Framing and preparatory questions for students to use

Initial questions might be:

- Do I have a career goal yet? If so, what do I need to develop to get there?
- What careers interest me?
- What do I like about that career?
- What don't I like about it?
- What skills do I need to do that work?
- How can I identify skills that will be needed in that career?

At a later stage, perhaps as graduation approaches, these questions may become more pertinent:

- What qualifications do I have?
- Will those qualifications enable me to do that work? If not, what else do I need to do?
- Would work experience and/or extracurricular activities be helpful?

- How can I complete a curriculum vitae to enhance my job prospects?
- What can I do to prepare for a selection interview?
- Are there other selection methods that might be used? If so, how can I prepare for them?
- What will this work role consist of?
- What kind of personal qualities might be needed?
- Do I have these qualities?
- How would I demonstrate them?

b Questions for nursing students

These questions illustrate one particular discipline-based set of prompts. Many of them are easily modified to meet other disciplines, particularly those directly linked to professional careers. The RSC's PDP materials (see earlier) provide another set of discipline-oriented prompts.

- 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 are...
- 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? (1-5 scale)
- 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 has most 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...
- I could seek that experience in the future. When would that be?

c Work experience modules

Graduate recruiters recommended that students grasp work experience opportunities and reflect upon the associated learning. These questions are intended as helpful prompts.

- What skills have I gained from my work experience?
- Which skills are most valuable to me as I continue my studies?
- Which skills will be most valuable to me as I start to apply for jobs?
- Which skills will be useful throughout my life?
- What are the main things that I learned from my work experience?
- Did anything surprise me? Why? How did it affect me?

d Transition from HE

Graduation is a transition point, what the American literature describes as 'moving on'. Here are some reflective prompts for that stage.

- What does it mean to be a graduate?

- What does it mean to be a graduate of my subject?
- How can I demonstrate my learning experiences and level of attainment?
- What skills do I think will be most useful in employment? What is my evidence for that view? Is that view supported by job descriptions, listening to employers, or the experiences of those working in various occupations?

e Building bridges between domains

The ELF is based upon three domains (academic, personal and career) and the interfaces between these. The following FLQs are intended to aid reflection on these interfaces. There are sets of questions for use by students and staff respectively.

Career/academic: questions for students

- Do I have a specific career path planned?
- Apart from my qualifications what will my experience at this institution provide me with to help my career success?
- Do I know what the career involves?
- What critical incidents/experiences/examples can I use to demonstrate specific and transferable competency?
- How does my subject knowledge equip me for the career(s) I am seeking to pursue?

Career/personal: questions for students

- What demands will my preferred career choice make on eg time, locations, flexibility, teamworking etc?
- Do I have any factors in my personal life which may positively or negatively impact on my preferred career choice?

Academic/career: questions for staff

- How is my course preparing students for employment options?
- How do I communicate the importance of transferability of skills between modules and into employment?

Placement/professional expectations: questions for staff

- What does the placement demand in terms of skill, responsibility, cost and time?
- How am I preparing students to bridge into the placement successfully?
- How does it match professional/work experience expectations of employers?

f Questions careers advisers might ask students

Graduate recruiters and participants in the focus groups stressed the importance of effective use of the support available from career services in HEIs. These questions are framed by a careers adviser for use in that context. Progressively they explore with the student the various dimensions and strands of employment possibilities and preferences.

- What type/size of organisation would you like to work for and why?
- Are the ethics of an organisation important to you and why?
- In what circumstance would you think an employer might need to give you further training?
- Why would this be important to a new employee?
- If you were asked to give a presentation at interview, how would you go about planning this?
- What experience are you involved in at present that might interest an employer?
- What else have you to offer an employer besides your degree?
- What is the relevance of your part-time job to this vacancy?
- How did you put the theory of your course into practice on your placements?
- Why should an employer recruit you rather than another student on the same course?
- How have you researched this career?
- How have you researched this company?
- What are your career goals and short/long-term plans?
- How have your career goals changed during your years at university?
- If you had the opportunity to talk with an employer, what issues would you raise?
- What career/jobs have you investigated and how did you go about it?
- Have you spoken with an employer about what they want from a new employee? If not, what do you think they would say?

g Questions for academic staff to ask students

It should be borne in mind that the focus of this publication is on the links between effective learning and employability. Thus the following questions are only a small sub-set of possible FLQs which academic tutors might use with students. A wider range will be covered in a subsequent publication.

- 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?

h Questions for institutional managers to consider

Many players have a role to play in the effective implementation of student PDP. While students must be the principal actors, institutional policies, practices and ethos will set the tone and provide the necessary operational environment. These prompts should enable reflection upon key related parameters.

How does PDP fit with our institutional mission and objectives in relation to:

- enabling students to become reflective learners and thereby more likely to succeed academically, professionally and personally?
- encouraging employers to actively seek students from us?
- enhancing the employability and life-planning skills of our students and graduates?
- encouraging staff and students to value the reflective learning benefits that can accrue from PDP?
- what policies, training and resources are required to enable PDP to work effectively within the institution?
- what steps, or additional strategies, are needed to disseminate good practice and share learning experiences?
- how we could use employers, PSBs and other contacts to progress those objectives?

i Questions for external agencies and organisations

Graduate recruiters and respondents from PSBs indicated a willingness to support HEIs in implementing student PDP effectively. These questions are intended to assist that goal.

- How can you help to develop and disseminate good practice in PDP in the HE sector?
- 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 countries and how can that information be shared with HEIs?
- What is happening in your agency/organisations and how can that information be shared with HEIs?

The foregoing illustrations are not intended to be exhaustive. Examples of prompts which could be used to explore the career/academic and the personal/career interfaces are given in the Appendix. Some of these questions illustrate critical incidents such as doubts about continuing with a chosen course. A broader raft of illustrative FLQs will feature in a subsequent publication.

Some respondents suggested progressive layering of the questions. That may indeed be how some students use them. Here, layering occurs within the sets of questions. Thus, students or staff are not necessarily expected to ask all of the questions in a set at the same point in time. However, since their experiences and approaches will vary, different users are likely to find particular utility in various sets or groups of questions at different points and in various situations. Of course, some questions can be used at more than one stage. As outlined in the section with advice from graduate recruiters, many students may use something akin to a three-phase model in relation to effective learning and employability, namely:

- initial exploration of career possibilities and options
- progressive analysis of skills development, academic growth and experiences through self-audit to inform PDP, particularly development planning, with continuing evolving consideration of the links between the academic, personal and career domains
- preparation for the 'moving on' stage either into employment or further study.

Findings from other studies

There is an extensive literature, although not necessarily widely consulted, that relates to the topic under investigation. Points from three sources are highlighted, namely:

- a survey for the Joint Working Group of current practices and issues in relation to student PDP and employability
- two publications emanating from the Employability Enhancement Theme
- some of the range of publications and other outputs associated with the HEFCE-funded, and now Higher Education Academy coordinated, ESECT projects.

This distillation is offered in order to give readers a succinct insight into recent key items.

Survey of current practices

Study into current practices was conducted in spring 2005 by Derek R Young (University of Stirling). It summarised current practices in Scottish HEIs in relation to student PDP and outlined issues in relation to the link with employability.

The report concluded that:

- there were examples of good practice programmes in use within Scottish HEIs
- PDP was recognised as having the potential to increase learner employability
- provision varied, with the trend being towards integrating delivery within the curriculum
- the range of approaches included stand-alone provision, core modules, PDP within the curriculum, personal tutor-based support and electronic facilitation
- there was a recognition of the potential merit of involving employers in the design, and even delivery, of student PDP.

The principal issues were:

- student engagement with PDP
- language and terminology
- recognition (and evidence) of the effect of PDP on effective student learning
- evidence of a causative link to enhanced employability.

Participants at a focus group held as part of the study indicated that they would welcome access to a pool of successful PDP 'models' and to any evaluations of approaches. There were pleas for greater clarity of terminology and concepts, careful timing of PDP activities, adequate resourcing and a balance between process and product.

Young cited a recent definition of employability by Lee Harvey (2005), namely:

'Employability is more than about developing attitudes, techniques or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a current career. It is about learning and the emphasis is less on 'employ' and more on 'ability'. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner. Employment is a by-product of this enabling process.'

(Harvey, L, 2005, *Defining Employability*, Centre for Research and Evaluation, Sheffield Hallam University).

Young concluded that Harvey's perspective was a widely shared one across the Scottish HE sector and that it was seen as a central facet of student PDP.

Young also cited a paper by Peters (2005) on issues associated with implementing progress files and student PDP. Particular attention was paid in that paper to four key themes:

- how to encourage holistic thinking and learning
- how to avoid undue attention being paid to the tool to support PDP, to the potential neglect of the processes involved
- how to motivate staff to become engaged in these processes
- how to motivate students to become fully engaged in the processes and to value them as a means of supporting effective learning.

(Peters, J, 2005, *Implementing Progress Files: Skills, PDP and Recording Achievement*, Learning and Teaching Centre, University College, Worcester).

Young argued that these issues closely matched those expressed in relation to the situation in Scotland in spring 2005.

The report included an appendix which listed links to interesting UK examples of practice such as:

- the PDP site in the Faculty of Education, University of Glasgow
- the electronic Personal Development Portfolio developed at the University of Strathclyde
- the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies Personal and Professional Development Portfolios
- PDP for student volunteers as a support network (SupNet) in Student Support Services at the University of St Andrews
- Developing an Employability Programme for the Faculty of Science, University of Glasgow
- Developing employability through the Undergraduate Ambassadors Scheme: An Honours project on Mathematics at the University of Glasgow
- Developing Employability and Learning Skills in First Year Class. Transferable skills development in Accountancy and Law, University of Glasgow.

From his survey Young concluded that:

'- across the Scottish higher education sector a number of different and varied approaches are being taken (such as) online PDP for all, career planning modules, internship modules, professional portfolios required for teachers, peer mentoring schemes for Arts/Social Sciences students. A greater emphasis is being placed on work-based learning and placement-based models.'

'Traditionally, PDP is integrated in some of the work placement modules such as Nursing, Midwifery, Teaching, Veterinary Medicine, etc, which have PDP as part requirement for meeting professional standards and registration.' (Young, 2005)

As part of the study Young conducted a questionnaire survey of 24 academic and support staff. The statements in the survey which attracted most agreement were:

- PDP has the potential to increase learner employability (22)
- students should be involved in the development of PDP (22)
- students should be involved in the development of employability skills (22)
- provision for employability should be part of the overall university experience (22)
- national student bodies should play a role in the implementation of PDP (20)
- national student bodies should play a role in the development of employability (20)
- there is an operational impact in delivering employability skills (20).

Those statements that attracted least support were:

- provision for delivering employability is a stand-alone exercise (2)
- students are taught to identify the needs of employers (3)
- student bodies are best placed to recognise the employability needs of students (3)
- PDP is driven by the needs of industry (4)
- the range of practices currently used to assess employability meets the needs of employers (4)
- the range of practices used to assess employability meets the needs of students (4)
- current methods used to assess employability are focused towards the needs of the careers service (4)
- PDP should be driven by the needs of industry (5)
- academics are best placed to deliver employability skills (5)
- employability skills should be focused at those subject areas and student groups with a low success rate of graduate employment (5).

Respondents were divided on whether or not employability skills had been clearly identified within their institutions, on whether students were able to identify and understand career/employer needs, on whether employability should be driven by the needs of employers and on whether or not employers should have a role in delivering employability within HE.

Recommendations made in the report included:

- a call for targeted research to establish the link between PDP and enhanced employability, focusing, at least initially, on professional areas with substantial experience of PDP
- a call for dissemination of overviews of what is already available UK-wide on practices which have benefited learners
- developing a regularly updated database of evaluated successful PDP strategies used by Scottish HEIs
- making greater use of both champions/supporters in Scottish HEIs and employers who expressed willingness to become more closely involved with HEIs in identifying and delivering employability skills.

Findings from Enhancement Theme publications

Two outputs have focused on related aspects of enhancing student employability, namely partnerships between institutions and students (Cockburn, D and Dunphy, J (Eds) QAA, 2006) and innovative projects from across the curriculum (Macfarlane-Dick, D and Roy, A (Eds) QAA, 2006).

Cockburn and Dunphy note that:

'There is little evaluative evidence from the UK on how co-curricular activities affect students' employability, although there is much anecdotal information. This links directly to the lack of research into the effect of the co-curriculum on students within the UK; however, these effects have been researched more thoroughly in the United States (US). Nonetheless, this project confirms that in the UK and abroad many institutions and students' associations - as well as individual students - believe that co-curricular activities do have a significant effect in enhancing the employment prospects of participating students.' (p2)

While acknowledging that the primary purpose of many co-curricular activities is to provide a service to members and/or the community rather than to directly enhance the employability of participants there is considerable evidence as demonstrated in earlier sections of this report that students and employers value such informal learning experiences.

The remainder of the publication on partnership between institutions and students outlines illustrative projects, grouped under five themes:

- the development of sports clubs and societies
- services for student welfare and diversity

- volunteering as a means of enhancing student employability
- entrepreneurship and enterprise
- issues of recognition.

The short study selected illustrations from the UK and overseas to demonstrate how steps were being taken under each theme to develop the awareness of participants/volunteers of the skills they were developing and the learning which was occurring.

Each section follows a common template with text airing some key features/trends/points and short references to some examples, followed by a case study and a highly focused two/three-line summary of quick wins and longer-term action.

The five case studies are as follows.

- Future Skills (University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Students' Association), which started in 2004-05 as a competition where teams and individuals (initially societies and sports clubs) were judged against objectives they set for themselves. Entrants had access to mentoring.
- Support Network (Supnet) Volunteers (University of St Andrews), where c30-40 student volunteers are trained to deliver welfare services on behalf of the University. The project has a voluntary PDP scheme.
- The Science Shop (Queen's University Belfast and University of Ulster), whereby community and volunteer groups can seek access to specialist skills which are then provided through project work by undergraduates and postgraduates. Ulster awards a certificate to participating students. The Science Shop concept originated in the 1960s in Holland. From 2005 it qualified for EU financial support.
- Future University of Surrey (FUUSE) programme, which is run twice yearly by the Students' Union, consists of five workshops and a week-long summer school. The aim is to help students to develop their business ideas and for some to develop a business plan. The programme partners with the School of Management and UniSDirect, the business interface arm of the University, and has links to Surrey County Council and Young Enterprise.
- Glasgow Caledonian University Leadership Programme is aimed at recognising student leaders. Students completing the programme receive a certificate signed by the Principal and the President of the Students' Association. The programme has various requirements (eg attendance at specific training for the role and at a key skills development seminar, completion of four personal development records, 80 per cent attendance at meetings/activities, attendance at a progress review meeting).

Theme 5, issues of recognition, surveys several examples, selected from the UK, the USA, South Africa and Australia, of approaches to the certification and accreditation of a co-curriculum. At the end of the report, websites are listed for all of the sources mentioned in the text.

In the conclusion, Cockburn and Dunphy note that:

- there appears to be a great deal of activity and development taking place to provide structured ways in which students can benefit from co-curricular involvement
- in Scotland much of this activity is primarily within the locus of the relevant students' association
- overseas it often rests with administrative divisions responsible for student affairs or student life
- the position in England may be influenced by the possibility of seeking access to a HEFCE funding stream
- few of the activities described had been formally evaluated, particularly in terms of the benefits for employability.

Their final messages were twofold:

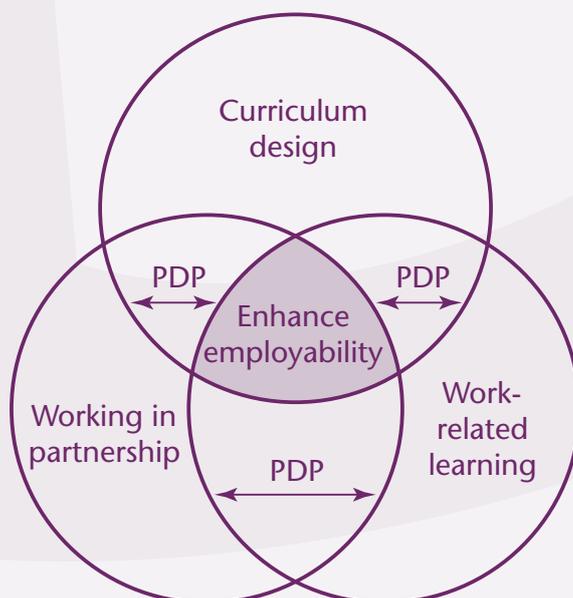
- making skills development explicit in co-curricular activities can be progressed without a heavy demand upon resources
- more needs to be done to chart and evaluate such activities.

The other report, by Macfarlane-Dick and Roy, complements the work of Cockburn and Dunphy by focusing on innovative projects across the curriculum aimed at enhancing student employability.

Twelve Scottish case studies are clustered under three headings:

- curriculum design
- working in partnership
- work-related learning.

The interrelationships between the three themes, PDP and enhancing employability are shown below:



That representation complements and interrelates with the ELF model shown in Figure 1 of this report, where PDP is framed in terms of effective learning and the interactions of three domains affecting a student (personal, academic and career). For example, as outlined earlier, students can ask themselves questions about their learning skills development, aspirations, personal preferences, and so forth and connect these with their programme of study (curriculum) and specific courses, their personal circumstances, and their views and hopes on employability.

They can also consider how they can maximise their learning from work experiences and placements and from other formal and co-curricular learning opportunities.

In the Introduction, Macfarlane-Dick and Roy argue that:

'When employability is considered as an element of curriculum design consistent with good teaching practice, all students benefit.' (p5)

They further argue that embedding employability within the curriculum needs to be done in ways that are compatible with subject disciplines, and offer case studies which illustrate this point.

The perceived benefits of working in partnership include:

- diverse groups of colleagues capitalising on a wide range of experiences, resources and skills
- spreading the workload
- lending credibility to developments
- promoting learning among the contributors, leading to further development
- where students are included in development, implementation and evaluation, ensuring that students are central in enhancement endeavours.

Curriculum design

Three of the case studies illustrate aspects of curriculum design.

Managing voluntary organisations; integrating theory and practice through the Learning Journey (Eleanor Burt and Colin Mason, University of St Andrews)

Piloted in 2005-06, the Learning Journey is a reflective placement aimed at giving senior honours students in the School of Management work experience in voluntary organisations. It is an integral component of a new module, Managing Voluntary Organisations: Perspectives, Policy and Practice. The module aims at raising awareness of the nature of the UK and international voluntary sectors and how these differ from the commercial and public sectors. The Learning Journey is designed to allow students to understand management problems through the eyes of practising managers in a voluntary sector setting. It is assessed via a reflective logbook (60 per cent) and an essay (40 per cent). The module is intended to enhance student employability, particularly for the rapidly expanding voluntary sector market.

Curriculum design for employability (Sara Lodge, University of St Andrews)

Sara Lodge focuses upon a module on Speeches and Speechwriting which she launched in 2003-04 in the School of English, drawing upon her personal experience as a speechwriter and her concern that the study of rhetoric had largely disappeared from the syllabus. Lodge argues that while the skills of writing, analysing, editing and discussion are potentially highly relevant to the world of work, there is not necessarily a formal link between tasks for the course and those encountered in the work situation. The module draws the attention of students to that linkage.

There are four assessment tasks, including the requirement to write a speech of not more than 1,500 words and an argumentation exercise with 800 words for and 800 words against a given proposition.

The Professional Communication: Full Service Agency Modules (Gary Lunt and Paula McNulty, Napier University, Edinburgh)

The Professional Communication case study reports on a suite of modules intended to provide students with realistic experiences of various professional communication contexts (public relations, advertising, corporate and organisational communication, employee communication).

Teams of four to six students work on a project provided by an organisation. Student roles develop between year two and year four. For example, in the context of advertising they progress through the roles of account executive, account manager and account director.

All students on the BA (Hons) Communications degree take these modules as part of their programme.

Feedback from clients has been positive.

Working in partnership

Macfarlane-Dick and Roy observe that the five case studies illustrate the benefits for staff and students when various partners come together. They conclude that enhancements follow:

- when 'real-world settings' are used to effect
- effective use is made of professional or student peer mentors
- from interdisciplinary and/or developmental team partnerships.

Lesley Black and Libby Curtis report on **Insight Out Learning**. Building on the Insight Out project, a joint initiative between the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, the Lighthouse and The Glasgow School of Art, it is aimed at helping Glasgow-based art and design graduates to develop new creative businesses. The Glasgow School of Art sought to embed the learning from the project to inform the undergraduate curriculum (Insight Out Learning). The specific vehicles were the development and use of innovative enterprise materials aimed at enabling undergraduates to reflect on and assess their planning strategies and future development needs.

Five components have been developed for use:

- a tool to help students to understand personal motives in life, work, creative pursuits and social activities
- a model for visualising the next five years and planning steps to achieve specific goals
- a business model which looks at the relationship between idea, production and delivery
- a model that identifies the operational elements of a business
- a questionnaire, discussion and a reflective diary exercise.

Jackie Connon, Anne Stevenson and Debbie Cruickshank outline the **mentoring scheme** operated at Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University, which links full-time postgraduates enrolled on the MSc in Human Resource Management to mentors who are experienced human resource practitioners. The scheme has operated since 2002 with the support of the local branch of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Although participation is voluntary, over 90 per cent of students take part. They meet with their mentor at least four times over the academic year. Many 'meet' face to face or electronically much more frequently, eg several times per semester.

The case study on **Interact**, by Ken Macrae, describes a multidisciplinary student competition for third and fourth-year architecture, engineering and quantity surveying students studying at the Macintosh School of Architecture, the Department of Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering at the University of Paisley, the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Glasgow and the Department of Building and Surveying at Glasgow Caledonian University.

Participation is a compulsory part of the curriculum in each case. The involvement is viewed positively by students, even though it is not part of their formal academic assessment.

The competition has run since 1995 and typically attracts some 60-70 teams each year. Against a client brief, teams of three students develop and cost their design.

Teams are formed through a 'trading fair' where student architects (the largest cohort) display their initial ideas for student engineers and quantity surveyors. Teams readily emerge by self-selection based on similar interests. In order to enhance the general performance of teams, a management consultant now makes a presentation on team dynamics. This has received positive feedback from students.

Students record team management, communication and decision-making in their Interact Diary. The pro forma enables personal and peer reflection. Steps have also been taken to provide training on presentation skills.

The competition provides a realistic opportunity for students to work in cross-disciplinary teams to deliver a task and communicate the outcomes.

Joy Perkins and Peter Fantom outline a placement and career skills module introduced at the University of Aberdeen in 2004-05, titled **Working Out?**, aimed at supporting and guiding level 3 students in molecular and cell biology to secure a year-long industrial placement, and more generally, to provide careers information. Prior to the introduction of the module, the School of Medical Sciences offered the opportunity of students taking a placement as part of their degree programme. There has been an increase in placements since the introduction of the semester-long module, taught jointly by the School of Medical Sciences and the Careers and Appointment Service.

Anne Tierney and John McColl report on the **Science Faculties' Employability Project** at the University of Glasgow, which was piloted in 2004-05 with 120 level 1 science students from selected laboratory groups in biology and from volunteers from all science subjects. This built upon a pilot in 2003-04 in biomedical sciences which adopted three important intervention points for level 1 students:

- in November after return of the first coursework
- in January after the first exams
- in May prior to making level 2 module choices.

Three matching training sessions were developed on:

- taking control (November)
- opportunities (January)
- making choices (May).

Use was made of pairs of staff and student mentors, with the latter volunteers coming from levels 3 and 4. Each pair worked with two groups of around 10 level 1 students.

Enhancements in 2005-06 included:

- a virtual learning environment site which will enable electronic handling and management of student portfolios
- larger group sizes (attendance was a problem in 2004-05)
- piloting of level 2 sessions, covering internships, placements, networking and level 3 module choices.

Tierney and McColl note that:

'The project has raised awareness of the employability agenda and the need to look at employability and PDP as inextricably linked processes and tackle them at an early stage in students' time at university.' (p51)

They express the hope that the project will have a positive influence across the years, that the number involved will grow, and that some students returning from a placement or internship might then act as a student mentor.

Work-related learning

Four case studies are provided. In addition, a further eight are featured on the Enhancement Themes website (www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/).

Introducing the case studies, Macfarlane-Dick and Roy point to the trend towards students gaining work experience during the academic year and/or vacations. They argue that it is less common to expect students to demonstrate what they have learned from these experiences and how the skills and competences gained or enhanced might aid their employability.

Graham, Waterston and Drummond report on a **Developing Skills from Part-time Employment** module at Napier University, Edinburgh designed to develop the skills of up to 40 students per semester who are engaged in part-time employment.

Students attend four workshops, in addition to following workbook-guided self-directed study. They also complete a problem-based learning exercise and maintain a reflective learning log. The assessment by their employer of their performance in the workplace, via a standard appraisal pro forma, contributes 10 per cent of the overall assessment for the module. The largest assessable component, the portfolio of activities and reflective log, accounts for 60 per cent. The remaining 30 per cent accrues from two problem-solving tasks (identification and application via a poster presentation).

The case study written by Lucy MacLeod discusses another Napier University module, **Volunteering in the Community**, which is a requirement for the cohort of c10-15 year one BSc Health Sciences students. As an elective it is also available to other students in years one, two or three.

The module started in 1992 as part of the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative. From the outset links were established with the Volunteer Centre in Edinburgh. The website of the latter now assists students to identify suitable volunteering opportunities.

Considerable experience has been acquired on effective ways of assessing the required reflective diary.

Verweij and Barclay describe the operation of **eSharp**, an on-line peer-reviewed journal run for and by postgraduate research students in arts, humanities and social sciences at the University of Glasgow.

The idea emerged in 2002 from a postgraduate conference, with the organisers deciding that there was a need to create an electronic journal to disseminate the research of postgraduate students.

There is an editorial board of around 20 postgraduates with responsibility for publishing, web management, events and marketing, finance and training (of the members of the board and peer reviewers). The project has received financial support from the University's Learning and Teaching Development Fund.

In 2005 eSharp increased the number of issues from two to four per year. It has also provided training workshops for postgraduates on topics such as academic editing and conference organising.

Finally, Gordon Walkden summarises the key features of the **Oil Business Game** (University of Aberdeen), which is the key integrative feature of an optional week-long residential field course open to up to 30 level 4 and MSc geology students.

Students work as individuals, pairs and teams (a six-person company). The companies have shares which are floated, then rise and fall, on a simulated stock market. The students collect geological samples, analyse these and use the information to bid for oil exploration licences.

Walkden notes that:

- the Game took considerable time to develop and test
- personality clashes can occur within student teams (and doubtless between them)
- he and colleagues have gained valuable insights into employability skills and how to engage students with these.

Some Higher Education Academy resources

A vast resource has been generated by the collaborative endeavours of the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE), the HEFCE-funded ESECT initiative and subject centres of the Higher Education Academy. Lengthy and detailed Student Employability Profiles have been developed for:

- Architecture
- Building and Surveying
- Planning
- Accountancy
- Business Studies
- Engineering
- Health Studies

- Midwifery
- Nursing
- Pharmacy
- Health Visiting
- Applied Health Professions
- Philosophy
- Religious Studies
- English
- Materials
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Mathematics
- Psychology

and others are being developed.

The profiles were produced to help staff to articulate, to students and employers, the employability skills developed through the study of that particular discipline.

The profiles vary in detail, but all include:

- appropriate reference to work-related skills in the relevant *Subject benchmark statement* published by QAA
- a summary of knowledge taught
- skills mapped against competences which the CIHE has identified as ones that help transform organisations.

The materials can be accessed either at: <http://www.cihe-uk.com/SEPI.php> or at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/869.htm>

Additionally, the Higher Education Academy has circulated several publications from the work on learning and employability which was sponsored by ESECT, a HEFCE-funded initiative which ran between October 2002 and February 2005.

The first four in Series Two, distributed to HEIs in November 2005, covered:

- Work-related learning in higher education (Neil Moreland)
- Employability and doctoral research postgraduates (Janet Metcalfe and Alexandra Gray)
- Part-time students and employability (Brenda Little et al)
- Ethics and employability (Simon Robinson).

Series One contained eight publications. Six of these were published in February 2004, namely:

- Employability in higher education: what it is - what it is not (Mantz Yorke)
- Employability: judging and communicating achievements (Peter Knight and Mantz Yorke)
- Embedding employability into the curriculum (Mantz Yorke and Peter Knight)
- Reflection and employability (Jenny Moon)
- Widening participation and employability (Geoff Layer)
- Entrepreneurship and higher education: an employability perspective (Neil Moreland).

Two were published in June 2004:

- Employability in work-based learning (Brenda Little et al)
- Pedagogy for employability (The Pedagogy for Employability Group).

Here some key points from the four publications in Series Two are summarised briefly. Readers are encouraged to consult and reflect upon the full range of these stimulating resources.

The core component of the publication on work-related learning in HE (Neil Moreland, 2005) explores:

- learning about oneself
- metacognition
- cognitive and learning styles
- career anchors
- self-theories, personal values and ethics
- career management
- learning and practising skills and personal attitudes of value in the world of work
- considering and experiencing the world of work
- curricula and learning how to learn.

From that base Moreland proposes that students adopt an activist approach to the future and career planning (p16), using self-knowledge to effect, especially when aligned with learning from experience and continuing enhancement of knowledge.

The second publication in Series Two focuses upon employability and doctoral research postgraduates (Janet Metcalfe and Alexandra Gray, 2005). The 12 sections cover: introduction; preview of key points; an overview of postgraduate education and the economy; the purpose of the PhD qualification; the subjects PhD researchers study; where they are employed; ways in which research training and employability can be aligned through effective use of PDP; the skills PhD graduates develop; the roles and responsibilities of universities; the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and supervisory teams; the characteristics of a PhD programme that are likely to enhance PhD graduates' employability; and a conclusion.

Metcalfe and Gray argue that reflection is integral to both effective research and PDP. In 2004, UK GRAD and others reviewed emerging practice of PDP for postgraduates in UK HEIs. Respondents cited benefits for the research students, the supervisor(s) and the supervisory process, the research project and the institution.

Little et al (2005) consider the topic of part-time students and employability. Like Moreland, Little et al build upon concepts articulated in a related Learning and Employability publication by Yorke and Knight (2004) - the USEM approach (understanding of subject and broader situations, skilful practice, efficacy beliefs, metacognition) - and the specific implications in the context of part-time students.

Again the potentiality of student PDP is emphasised, along with the reality that for many "time-poor" part-time students with busy "other lives", such seemingly positive purposes may not be self-evident: rather, PDP may be seen as an additional (and unproductive) task' (p14).

They go on to argue that:

'One way of helping part-time students appreciate the value of PDP may be to encourage them to use PDP to reflect explicitly on the relationships between, on one hand, how and what they are learning through their academic studies and, on the other, their everyday work experiences. For example, at an early stage in their studies, rather than using PDP to demonstrate their existing achievement, they could be encouraged to think about their work-related achievement to date and to identify those aspects which they feel they can use to tackle new learning tasks.' (p14)

Finally, in the fourth publication Simon Robinson (2005) explores ethics and employability.

Robinson posits that employability involves:

- *'Reflectivity, including the capacity to reflect holistically and to learn.*
- *Responsibility, involving the capacity to identify and articulate self-beliefs, and be responsible for these beliefs and their development.*

- *Connectivity, involving the ability to make connections between: experiences over time; the self and its core communities, including work; and the social and physical environment outside such communities.*
- *Innovativity, the capacity to both handle new challenges and create new opportunities.'* (p9)

Robinson sets his exposition in the context of the professions and business. He stresses the roles of respect, integrity and empathy in the development of character and identity.

Robinson suggests that:

- *'Ethics can be embedded into Personal Development Planning (PDP) files. Increasingly a part of the reflective development of a student, these are important in making connections with the different aspects and areas of learning.*
- *Ethics and values could be developed as part of service learning (through volunteer modules) and citizenship curriculum.'* (p16)

Concluding remarks

There is considerable convergence between the sample of views from graduate recruiters and PSBs and the pointers from the case studies summarised in this report. The latter illustrate ways of pursuing employability-related goals and of linking these to effective, reflective learning.

The illustrative FLQs are offered as prompts for use by a wide range of interested parties, especially students, but also staff working in HE, senior institutional managers, employers and staff in PSBs.

The key messages are:

- many stakeholders are attracted to an effective, reflective learning focus for PDP, in this instance specifically in relation to aspects of employability
- there is a wealth of experience within HEIs and among employers and professional bodies which merits greater dissemination, evaluation, adoption, adaptation and development
- there is a widespread belief that effective student PDP is/can be beneficial, provided that it is properly designed and supported and gains the engagement of students, staff and institutional managers. In essence, the message is, do it well!
- employers do not appear to hold reductionist views of the purposes of HE. On the contrary, they espouse broad views of the benefits of formal and informal learning. However, they do expect graduates to possess levels of skills which distinguish them, for example, from non-graduates. Those entering professions must meet key competency standards.
- while there is encouraging evidence of growing innovation and experimentation in the curriculum, in providing work experience and more diverse learning opportunities, many of the developments reported here are of comparatively recent origin, ie they are at a pre-embedding stage. Some examples demonstrate that embedding can occur through sustained commitment and support and careful attention to workability, relevance and the benefits which accrue to students and to others.
- embedding appears to be aided when there is broader, deeper and sustained support within the institution or faculty/school for the approach.
- capturing the interest and enthusiasm of students (and staff) is paramount. Thus, how and why are at least as important considerations as what.

Graduate recruiters stressed the value of activities such as work shadowing, discussions with experienced people, and internships. Many localised initiatives seek to address these objectives. However, they appear to involve a small proportion of the student body. Research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation by Furlong and Cartmel (2005) suggests that first-generation students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds might benefit from additional institutional support in areas such as networking, internships and work placements.

Many of the points made in discussion at the focus groups associated with this project echoed the findings of the 2005 survey by Young, eg a desire for information about successful approaches, a preference for a focus upon effective learning, the importance of motivation and engagement, the need for clear commitment and effective institutional support, the desirability of alignment to existing procedures, and the avoidance of duplication and perceptions of bureaucracy. Four additional points emerged. Firstly, the implementation of student PDP within Scottish HEIs is progressing, albeit in a range of forms and at differing rates, including intra-institutional variations. Secondly, at present there is a range of views about the role of institutions and of academic staff in relation to the implementation and operation of student PDP. Thirdly, there is some sensitivity over the potential implications for staff (academic and support) of discussions with students pertaining to the personal domain in the ELF. These concerns are complex and suggest a need for clear understandings and protocols, and probably for training and support. Fourthly, there is a growing array of institutional and inter-institutional initiatives and projects in Scotland and elsewhere and a related need for enhanced dissemination of their purposes and outcomes. Many of these are subject specific, such as the Fund for Development of Teaching and Learning project being undertaken at the University of Bolton to evaluate PDP in the Leisure, Sport and Tourism undergraduate curriculum (<http://www.enhancingemployability.org.uk>).

The hope is that the rich array of materials covered in this report will be both of direct utility to a range of potential users (students, staff, institutional managers etc) and a prompt for reflective evaluation of approaches, practices and perceptions.

Appendix - Further illustrative focused learner questions for use by students

Career/academic questions

These are additional prompts which could provide helpful insights into this interface. They can be used to supplement or replace some of those listed in the main section of this report. They have been provided separately to avoid what might have appeared to be somewhat daunting lengthy lists of questions.

- How would my career prospects be affected if I discontinued my studies or changed my course?
- What are my career prospects if I continue my studies?
- Am I committed to my studies and the choice(s) of career?
- Do I regard my HE course as vocational?
- What subjects link directly to my chosen career?
- Could I be self-employed?
- What would that involve?
- How would I get started?
- How do I cope with study?
- What lessons does that offer in terms of how I would cope with employment?
- How have I coped with part-time employment?
- What have I learned from these experiences?
- How can work experiences inform my choices and impact on my learning?

Personal/career questions

One of the most demanding dimensions of self-reflection is knowing oneself in a deep and reliable way. Here the emphasis remains on the link to employability, and these FLQs are aimed at aiding that aspect of self-knowledge.

- How much do I know about certain kinds of jobs?
- How much have my ideas changed about certain jobs?
- What kinds of things do I like to think about/do?
- Have I had to deal with members of the public in a formal capacity?
- Do I like doing it?
- What did I learn from those experiences?
- How could I explain that learning to others?

- What motivates me?
- Do I prefer to organise things in advance?
- Do I prefer to be indoors or outdoors?
- Do I prefer to work on one task at a time or multiple tasks?
- What are my key personal values, qualities and skills?
- Do I like working as a member of a team?
- Do I like making presentations?
- How might my values, motivations and personality impact on my ability to enter my chosen career?
- What have I done that might be of interest to employers?
- What questions might I be asked at an interview? How can I prepare for the interview?
- How can I show in my application, and at interview, that I have the skills, knowledge, experience and personality that the post demands?

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The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

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