Personal development planning

This is an Employability CETL resource which draws upon existing good practice in the faculty of Development and Society (D&S). It comprises examples of good practice, questions which teams can collectively consider and discuss as well as recommendations for addressing the employability agenda when writing for validation. It draws evidence from evaluative work on the validation documents submitted by course planning teams in 2007 and is intended primarily as part of a pack for teams preparing for validation.

Engaging with the purpose of PDP

There are a number of examples of good practice in articulating the purpose of PDP across subject areas. Courses in D&S generally prioritise one of these two approaches to PDP:

- The first is in PDP supporting the development of skills and knowledge which would prepare students for applying for and gaining employment, for understanding the world of professional practice (for example Cert HE Housing Practice / Dip HE Housing Professional Studies, 2007; FdA/BA Hons Education and Specialist Learning Support, 2008).
- The second approach places an emphasis on PDP developing employability attributes and positive attitudes to learning and work (such as lifelong learning values, ability to demonstrate flexibility, adaptability, tolerance to stress) (BA Hons English, 2007; BA Hons English and History, 2007).

Both of these approaches are valuable. In addressing PDP, courses could look to find a balance in integrating the two, where PDP both prepares students with the right attitudes and personal qualities for employability and with the skills to engage with job searching, interview and CV writing practice, the ability to articulate skills to employers, becoming familiar with the needs of the employer and the targeted profession.

Innovative developments in PDP

Several drivers for development in PDP were identified in the D&S validation documents (2006/07):

a) LTI fellowship awarded to a member of staff with a focus of developing e-PDP in the faculty (LLB Business Law, 2007);

b) The production of a VLE careers resource tailored specifically to the needs of the course (FdA/BA Early Years, FdA/BA Education and Learning Support, FdA/BA Professional Learning in Children and Young People's Services, 2006);

c) The introduction of e-portfolios (BSc (Hons) Geography, 2007; Cert HE Housing Practice / Dip HE Housing Professional Studies, 2007; LLB Business Law, 2007; BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies/BA (Hons) Children and Playwork/BA (Hons) Childhood Studies, 2007).

Support and guidance for PDP activity

Examples of good practice were found in courses which placed a strong emphasis on providing continuous guidance and formative feedback to students as they engaged in the PDP process, further tailoring this guidance to the level of study or work experience students were engaging in (BSc (Hons) Geography, 2007).

Another example of good practice was found in a course which involved all key stakeholders (tutors, employers, careers service and peers) in the process of giving/sharing feedback on the PDP process (MSc Environmental Management, 2008). Involving employers in the PDP process is valuable in giving students a realistic insight into the demands of different career routes which in turn encourages students to reflect on their own skills development needs.

The involvement of the careers service in organising workshops and events was considered good practice in providing support and guidance to students' PDP work and it fosters the expertise of the careers service in enhancing graduate employability (Cert HE Housing Practice / Dip HE Housing Professional Studies, 2007: 23).

Questions to consider and discuss

- To what extent does the PDP process take into account both of these purposes:

  ◊ To place more emphasis on applying for employment/ gaining employment / understanding the world of work (good examples can be found in Cert HE Housing Practice / Dip HE Housing Professional Studies, 2007);

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◊ To teach positive attitudes to work and learning, employability attributes (such as lifelong learning, ability in students to demonstrate flexibility, adaptability, tolerance to stress (good examples can be found in BA Hons English, 2007).

- Is there an opportunity to consider the advantages of introducing e-portfolios as a PDP tool, particularly from the point of view of enhancing employability skills and attributes and encouraging career development learning?

- What are the possibilities for involving all key stakeholders (tutors, peers, central department and employers) more fully in the processes of ongoing feedback and support for the PDP process? Discuss the contributions which each of these stakeholders could make to support students' reflective learning in PDP.

Recommendations for addressing the employability agenda when writing for validation

Writing for validation on PDP and its effect on employability could benefit from placing equal emphasis on each of these aspects:

a) How PDP will enhance the development of students' skills and knowledge relevant to the world of work

b) How PDP will enhance students' understanding of the world of work and their ability to access employment

c) How PDP will work to instil the attitudes and personal attributes relevant in an employability context, such as lifelong learning values, ability to demonstrate flexibility, adaptability and tolerance to stress (Hawkins, Dacre Pool and Sewell).

References:

1. Dacre Pool, L. & Sewell, P. 2007, "The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability", *Education and Training,* vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 277-289.
2. Hawkins, P. 1999, *The art of building windmills: career tactics for the 21st century,* Graduate into Employment Unit.

References to definitive documents

https://staff.shu.ac.uk/fds/workStudents/quality/defDocs.asp
[Accessed 20th February, 2009]

1. BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies/BA (Hons) Children and Playwork/BA (Hons) Childhood Studies revalidated April 2007.
2. BA (Hons) English and History revalidated May 2007.
3. BA (Hons) English revalidated May 2007.
4. BSc (Hons) Geography validated February 2007.
5. Cert HE Housing Practice / Dip HE Housing Professional Studies validated May 2007.
6. FdA/BA Early Years, FdA/BA Education and Learning Support, FdA/BA Professional Learning in Children and Young People's Services validated December 2006.
7. FdA/BA(Hons) Education and Specialist Learning Support validated May 2008
8. LLB Business Law validated May 2007.
9. MA International Criminal Justice validated May 2007.
10. MSc Environmental Management (International Resource Climate Management) validated June 08.