



## Progress Files Implementation

This statement outlines Lancaster's implementation of Progress Files in line with sector expectations for all students (UG, PGT & PGR). The present paper summarises implementation so far and the support available to students and departments. In addition, it is proposed to include Standard Practice statement within the Lancaster *Manual of Academic Regulations & Procedures* (MARP) to reflect University expectations in relation to provision and support of Progress Files. This is presented in section 3. The operation and impact of Progress Files will be monitored and reviewed with the University's standard annual and periodic quality review processes.

**Progress Files** are intended to be a means by which 'students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development'<sup>1</sup>. A variety of means of supporting the process and enabling students to maintain a record of personal development are offered at Lancaster University, as is appropriate to different disciplines and levels of study<sup>2</sup>.

The **LTA Policy**<sup>3</sup> identifies the following relevant objectives - students on all Lancaster programmes will have the opportunity to:

- develop the analytical & critical skills necessary to engage with their discipline(s) and to reflect on their academic & personal progress,
- access appropriate support that promotes personal development and facilitates engagement in their programme & in university life,
- benefit from the knowledge & skills developed at Lancaster to continue to engage critically with their discipline(s), grow intellectually & positively contribute to society.

The Lancaster **Student Support Policy** further clarifies this objective as 'to provide high quality support for personal and professional development' and identifies the role of the Centre for Enterprise, Employment & Careers (CEEC) in offering information, advice and guidance on career planning and the provision of the online support system **MyPlace** as a tool to support students to reflect on and record their learning and development at Lancaster. Prompts for reflection are also aligned to the Careers Timeline – a structured framework which encourages students to reflect at different stages in their degree programme on progress and plans for future careers or further study<sup>4</sup>.

Dearing identified three elements to for the Progress File in Higher Education:

1. a transcript recording student learning and achievement (both during and at the end of a programme of study) provided by the University;
2. an individual's personal record of learning and achievements, progress reviews and plans

1 National Committee of Inquiry in Higher Education; 1997 (Dearing Report)

2 The GLG Project supported the development of an online tool, LUPDP to aid students in engaging with personal development planning (2004-07). A number of departments have also developed paper-based and/or online support including the use of learning logs (LUVLE) and reflective journals embedded into the design of programmes.

3 LTA Policy and its sub-policies are available at: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/policies>

4 The eLearning Strategy also identifies a commitment to supporting personal development through online tools.

that can be used to clarify personal goals and provide a resource from which material is selected to produce personal statements (e.g. CVs etc) for employers, admissions tutors and others; and

3. a structured and supported processes to develop the capacity of individuals to reflect upon their own learning and achievement, and to plan for their own personal educational and career development (personal development planning).

Progress Files are intended to make the outcomes, or results, of learning in higher education more explicit, identify the achievements of learning, and support the concept that learning is a lifetime activity.<sup>5</sup>

### **1. An Enhanced Transcript**

The University is responsible for providing transcript for all graduating students. From July 2007, an enhanced transcript has been made available which includes the expectations of the Diploma Supplement<sup>6</sup>.

### **2. A Personal Record**

Previously the University supported students in maintaining a personal record through an online tool (LUPDP) but engagement with this tool was low. Following detailed evaluation of this experience and benchmarking against practice across the sector, it was recommended that a revised facility was required which would be both more flexible and adaptable to different ways of engaging in reflection on learning, and give enhanced opportunities for students to share and gain feedback on their records<sup>7</sup>.

The revised online tool, *MyPlace*, was made available in September 2007 for all undergraduate and postgraduate students. Later in the Michaelmas term a specific variant to support the PGR/Supervisor relationship was made available, *MyPlace* (PGR). *MyPlace* provides a facility for students to record, organise, share and comment on their learning, and academic departments have the opportunity to more formally link and customise to specific programmes. Students are prompted at key points to reflect on their learning and employability via a link to the Careers Timeline. Students will also shortly be able to access interim transcript information about their academic performance on individual modules. *MyPlace* is private Lancaster University online community which will continuously evolve in response to feedback from users<sup>8</sup>.

### **3. A Structured & Support Process**

The Lancaster Manual of Academic Regulations & Procedures<sup>9</sup> (MARP 4.1-1R & 2R) specify departmental responsibilities in relation to academic guidance, tutorial & learning support. It is proposed that the concept of Progress Files as a 'structured and supported

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<sup>5</sup> A joint statement on Progress Files was developed by Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP); Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals (CoSHEP), Standing Conference of Principals (SCoP), Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA): <http://qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/default.asp>

<sup>6</sup> This contains a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the degree programme. The Lancaster University enhanced transcript includes a profile of module grades and key information about the award itself.

<sup>7</sup> The LTA Committee drew on evidence a study of the PDP experience at Lancaster (CSET PDP: Working Progress, August 2006.) & wider sector benchmarking. It subsequently established a Progress Files Steering & Project Group with the remit to develop a revised online tool and advise on the minimum expectations as part of the LTA Policy.

<sup>8</sup> Further information & guidelines are available at: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/students\\_myplace](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/students_myplace)

<sup>9</sup> MARP is available on the web. Section C is at: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/marp\\_c](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/marp_c).

process' is interpreted within this context.

Departments are encouraged to devise appropriate local mechanisms for encouraging and supporting all students (UG, PGT and PGR) to reflect upon their learning and employability. *MyPlace* (and *MyPlace* (PGR)) provides an online facility to assist this commitment. Whilst some departments may use existing tutorial arrangement to support student reflection, others may wish to align the commitment with specific modules or components of a programme. Recognising the different ways in which reflection on learning takes place and contribute to enhancing student achievement and employability, one single model is *not* proposed.

*It is not proposed to introduce any additional regulations into MARP, but to make more explicit University expectations by including a Standard Practice statement in Section 4:*

'Departments should define and communicate clearly to students how they assist them to realise the benefits of reflecting on and recording learning, developing employment awareness, and engaging in career planning.'

#### **4. Guidance & Support**

On the assumption that there should be flexibility to meet the diverse needs of different types/level of student and discipline/programme, and that any structure of guidance and support should not be overburdensome (i.e. sustainable):

1. The University provides an enhanced transcript and an online tool (*MyPlace*) to support students in producing a personal record of reflection.
2. General guidance for students on the availability and purpose of this online facility is initially provided via the *Supporting Learning At Lancaster: Essentials Guide* and specific guidance provided within the *MyPlace* tool<sup>10</sup>.
3. CELT provide a range of guidance to staff on Progress Files and *MyPlace*, including briefing sessions, online materials and case studies. Departments have identified key contacts and briefing have also been provided for these staff.
4. CEEC also works closely with departments to support careers education and the Careers Timeline is being integrated with the *MyPlace* tool.

Further information on the tool, a summary of the benefits of engaging in personal reflection, frequently asked questions, & guidelines on use are available at: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/students\\_myplace](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/students_myplace). Students can access *MyPlace* through the University virtual learning environment (LUVLE), the CELT web site or the University home page (eLearning @ Lancaster). The specialist tool to support the supervisor-postgraduate research student relationship, *MyPlace* (PGR) is available from Faculty & CELT research student web pages: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/research\\_students](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/research_students).

#### **5. Monitoring & Review**

The operation and impact of Progress Files as part of the overall student learning experience at Lancaster will be monitored and reviewed through the regular processes of Annual Teaching Review and Periodic Quality Review.

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<sup>10</sup> Currently, a number of student mentors are also being employed to provide online support within *MyPlace*.