

PADSHE PROJECT

Autumn 1996

Newsletter

Personal and Academic Development for Students in Higher Education



In this issue ...

Page 2
Padshe selected for new HEFCE funding
The view from English departments
PADSHE, records of achievement and the Dearing Reviews

Page 3
The scope of the PADSHE Project

Page 4
Focus ... PADSHE Project work at Liverpool John Moores University





Students at the University of Nottingham are being encouraged to generate reflections. The Personal and Academic Development Programme, piloted in the Department of English Studies, creates a framework for reflective practice. It enables students to make regular reviews of their progress, with the support of academic tutors and careers advisers, and helps to maximise their academic achievements and employment opportunities.

A project to extend this Nottingham initiative to another four UK universities

has attracted financial backing to the tune of £248K from HEFCE's new Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning. This is the PADSHE Project (Personal and Academic Development for Students in Higher Education). Led by the University of Nottingham, it involves the universities of Birmingham, Liverpool John Moores, Newcastle and Northumbria and will run for three years.

In the context of the Dearing reviews of 16-19 and Higher Education, PADSHE has a contribution to make to national debate. The Dearing Report on Education 16-19

indicates a commitment to rework and relaunch the National Record of Achievement (NRA) as the key instrument to support lifetime learning. For a growing proportion of the population, the Higher Education sector is centrally placed between school and the world of work. The level and quality of the commitment which the universities offer to the introduction of a new NRA will therefore be crucial. The PADSHE Project seeks to establish the specific needs of universities in relation to recording achievement and thereby to identify a basis for their permanent commitment.

 THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM	 Liverpool John Moores University  UNIVERSITY of NORTHUMBRIA at NEWCASTLE	UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE 
--	---	---

PADSHE selected for new HEFCE funding

Funding for the University of Nottingham PADSHE project is being provided from a new HEFCE investment dedicated to improving teaching and learning.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England has committed £8 million over the next two years to the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL), a new initiative aimed at stimulating developments and promoting good practice across the higher education sector.

This is the first time that the Council has linked the results of its quality assessment process to its allocation of funds to the sector. Only institutions judged to be providing high quality education were eligible to bid for project funds.

Forty-four projects are being supported under phase one, which covers the 15 subjects assessed by the Council between summer 1993 and spring 1995. They were selected from 192 original applications, 72 of which made a second-stage bid. Nearly half the successful projects involve consortium arrangements between two or more institutions.

'The introduction of the FDTL looks like providing a significant impetus to enhancing teaching quality in Higher Education,' says PADSHE Project Director, Dr Angela Smallwood. 'In the field of Records of Achievement, it is widely acknowledged that progress at HE level has been slow so far partly because activity has been too much confined to the grass roots. HEFCE support for successful bids under the FDTL requires a senior level of commitment within HE institutions. This should guarantee for the first time both serious take-up of good practice at the institutional level and a new breadth of dissemination.'

The view from English Departments

The first pilot schemes developed in partner universities within the PADSHE Project are located in English departments or groupings including English.

Experience at Nottingham so far suggests that to innovate through English may be particularly advantageous. As a subject, English is perceived as mainstream, traditional, non-vocational and heavily over-subscribed. The fact that Nottingham's Department of English Studies has benefited from developing a PADP has been influential in securing the interest and involvement of other departments.

The Dearing report on 16-19 Education (March 1996) proposes a revision and relaunch of the National Record of Achievement (NRA). The views of academics in English departments were recently surveyed through a questionnaire sent to the representatives' network of the Council for College and University English. One third of responders felt that the discipline of English lent itself to such developments, pointing out that English encourages reflective

learning and critical evaluation. The majority however saw reflective practice as part of any effective learning process, regardless of discipline, and there was a wide support for the concept of procedures and record systems which would encourage personal development and academic planning and help students achieve greater independence and make the most of their degree course.

The survey revealed two major caveats. Additional pressures on academics' time must be avoided (most tutors are currently spending 1-2 hours per week providing personal support or guidance for undergraduates) and any move to impose a standardised process on HE would be counter-productive. Views in this constituency on the role of IT in the development of a new NRA in the HE sector are therefore divided. IT promises efficiency and time-saving. On the other hand there is a danger that it would attempt to replace personal contact with the computer but, because personal contact will always be necessary, the tutor's workload might be increased rather than reduced.

PADSHE, records of achievement and the Dearing reviews



Sir Ron Dearing, Chair of the current Review of Higher Education

The need for universities to accelerate developments related to records of achievement is signalled in the recent Dearing *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds* (March 1996). Dearing places a high value on a re-launched National Record of Achievement (NRA) because it

has the potential to be much more than a summary of achievement. It could be an important instrument through which young people develop the practice of managing and taking responsibility for their own learning, as a skill they need for life, continuing through college, university and into work.

(Summary Report, p.15, para. 4.10)

Originally attended for administrative use by staff only, the Personal and Academic Development Programme in English Studies at Nottingham was redesigned to be student centred. In the process it took on some, but not all, of the features of a record of achievement. It acquired the further functions of encouraging reflective practice in students, developing their skills awareness, and helping them to make

links between academic study and the world of work. On the other hand, it was essential that it should not be confidential, but semi-public, and held jointly by student and personal tutor on behalf of the department.

This unorthodox joint ownership of the PADP is proving to be a major advantage. By integrating staff and student responsibilities it guarantees that they are fulfilled, and thus the PADP overcomes one of the main problems associated with records of achievement in Higher Education, that of non-completion.

Crucially, although it in some ways happens to resemble the school-based NRA, the PADP addresses the immediate **needs** of HE, and its design and scope have been developed organically, entirely **within** HE, exclusively **for** HE.

Experience at Nottingham suggests that the in-house evolution of the PADP makes it relatively attractive to academic colleagues across the disciplines. We await the report of the Dearing Review of Higher Education in summer 1997. A move to allow universities some freedom to customise the new NRA to their own culture would be very welcome.

The Scope of the PADSHE Project

The PADSHE Project aims to disseminate a Personal and Academic Development Programme (PADP) developed at the University of Nottingham. The PADP achieves much of the potential of a conventional record of achievement whilst reflecting the particular needs and requirements of university staff and students.

Nottingham is collaborating with four further institutions, two post and two pre-1992 universities. Work has begun with the University of Birmingham, Liverpool John Moores University, the University of Newcastle and the University of Northumbria at Newcastle, not simply replicating the Nottingham example, but exchanging good practice and starting to explore the factors which differentiate partner universities from across the range of the HE sector.

The PADP in the English Department at Nottingham is a complete system for the management of students within modular degree schemes. It formalises staff/student interactions, uses resources efficiently and guarantees a consistent level of personal and academic support and guidance across the whole department for all students individually. It includes a documented schedule of structured meetings between personal tutor and tutor on a one-to-one basis, to monitor and encourage academic progress, personal development and career planning.

In the process of following the programme, students are enabled to develop their skills awareness and their understanding of their academic and personal needs and progress, and to maximise their career potential. At the same time, because awareness of the skills content of modules is increased, academic staff are encouraged to adapt the curriculum and its delivery to the skills needs of their students. The programme introduces a new approach to careers advice, integrating it with academic processes in departments, to provide students with support in both their academic and their career development.



Student and tutor in one-to-one discussion of progress and plans

The PADP has impact upon several major dimensions of teaching quality:

- student learning
- student support and guidance
- student career management
- student progression and achievement
- quality assurance and enhancement

The strength of PADPs is that they underpin and integrate all these aspects of teaching and learning development, and streamline many functions and processes which have traditionally gone on in a piecemeal fashion within academic departments. The PADP achieves greater efficiency and assures standards while maximising the educational benefits to students. It supports an important culture change from a rather ad hoc and patchy approach to personal tutoring geared largely to dealing with students with problems, to an approach committed to supporting all students positively and enabling all to realise their full potential.

PADSHE projects in the partner universities

- At **Nottingham**, senior management supports the dissemination of personal and academic records across the institution. The English Studies PADP has been made available to other departments whose staff and students are invited to critique it as a means of identifying their specific needs. New programmes are being designed for students on both vocational and non-vocational courses including American and Canadian Studies, Applied Bio-Chemistry and Food Sciences, Economics, Mathematics, Materials Engineering, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Physics and Urban Planning. Projects to incorporate students' extra-curricula activities are underway and an IT version of the English Studies PADP (currently paper-based) will be trialled next semester.
Contact: Dr Angela Smallwood
- The **University of Birmingham** School of English has already developed a computer-based module selection system to assist student programme-planning and their project will be integrating this with other features of a PADP to achieve a streamlined system and maximise efficiency. In addition, a basic RoA devised at the institutional level at the University of Birmingham, but not so far adopted by the School of English, will inform the process of developing a PADP of their own.
Contact: Professor Kelsey Thornton
- **Liverpool John Moores** -- see Focus feature on page 4.
Contact: Dr Jo Croft
- The project in the Department of English Literature and Linguistic Studies at the **University of Newcastle** will be exploring ways of making undergraduate records jointly owned by staff and students, of integrating departmental with University databases, and establishing staff training needs within a personal tutor system to be based extensively on electronic communication systems. It will operate collaboratively with related initiatives within the University: in the faculties of Medicine, Environmental and Social Sciences, Arts and Agricultural and Biological Sciences.
Contact: Dr Tom Cain
- The **University of Northumbria at Newcastle** operates a highly centralised student management system. The Department of Historical and Critical Studies is developing a pilot Personal Tutor Scheme within that context, to provide guidance and support to students in English and will be following it with a postgraduate pilot for the MA in Creative Writing. First stage dissemination is likely to extend to courses in History, History of Ideas and History of Modern Art, Design and Film.
Contact: Professor Allan Ingram



'Liverpool John Moores has been an active participant in the Records of Achievement and Higher Education Project and has developed procedures for recording student achievement in a number of different Schools. The University views this as one of a number of ways in which it can promote the quality of learning and the development of relevant transferable skills to enhance graduate employability.'

Dr Steve Jackson

Assistant Provost (Learning), Liverpool John Moores University

Dr Jo Croft describes PADSHE Project work at Liverpool John Moores University

In September this year, staff in Literature, Life and Thought department of the School of Media, Critical and Creative Arts at Liverpool John Moores University launched a pilot "Personal and Academic Record" scheme with Level One students.

One of the major challenges is that our students - both single and joint honours - are involved in a diverse range of degree programmes. The LLT department offers three different single honours degrees: Literature, Life and Thought (an interdisciplinary degree in Literature and Cultural History), American Studies and Imaginative Writing. It also teaches many students on joint degree programmes (e.g. LLT with Women's Studies, Psychology or French etc), some of which are based in different JMU departments. For several reasons, it would have been far easier to limit the LLT Personal and Academic Record Scheme to single honours LLT students. However, this would have been done little to tackle one of the central problems identified by staff teaching in the department: the fragmentary nature of students' experience within the modular degree system. It was decided therefore that all students on LLT modules should be allocated an LLT Personal Tutor, and all Level One students would be included in the pilot scheme.

This semester has also seen the launch of another initiative by LLT tutors aimed at countering the trend towards ever larger teaching groups and the possible

alienation of students. A new Tutorial Module has been set up at Level One, whereby all students are taught by their Personal Tutors for their first semester at JMU. This module replaces a School-wide module previously taken by about 300 students which focused on difference interdisciplinary approaches to reading and interpreting texts (originally entitled 'Methods in the Humanities'). In place of this large lecture-based course, the tutorial module allows students to work in relatively small groups (of around 12), reading a variety of texts from literature and cultural history chosen by individual tutors (topics range from 'Prostitution' to 'Horseracing'). Skills such as essay writing, effective use of library resources and oral presentation can therefore be developed within the framework of a content-led course.

Crucially, the Tutorial Module establishes weekly contact between Personal Tutors and their students and so provides an effective opportunity for distributing information about the Personal and Academic Record Scheme. A specific session has been set aside within the module to enable tutors to introduce the Personal and Academic Records, and a further one-to-one meeting with Personal Tutors is scheduled for the beginning of next semester to discuss students' progress within the scheme.

Coinciding with the introduction of the Personal and Academic Record Scheme, another pilot project has been set up in the LLT department, aimed at offering

our first year students a chance to gain GNVQ qualifications. A limited group of between 30 and 50 students will be given the opportunity to take 'Key Skills' units (at Level Three) in 'Communication Skills', 'Improving Your Learning and Performance', 'Working with Others' and 'Information Technology'. As with the Personal and Academic Record Scheme, this project will be administered through the LLT Tutorial Module. An attempt has been made to map the skills required for the GNVQ units onto those covered in the module, and students will be asked to compile their own portfolio of work for assessment. This will consist, for the most part, of work already produced for the Tutorial Module's assessment.

Obviously, there are many complex issues to be addressed about the relationship between GNVQs and Higher Education degrees, not the least of which is the role of academic staff as GNVQ assessors. However, the process of encouraging students actively to identify the skills components underlining their degree work has proved to be a useful aspect of LLT's involvement in the GNVQ pilot study, and it is hoped that this will add to the success of the Personal and Academic Record Scheme.

Dr Jo Croft
Liverpool John Moores

Please deliver to

PADSHE Project Newsletter
Department of English Studies
University of Nottingham
Trent Building
University Park
Nottingham. NG7 2RD

Editor: Angela Smallwood Designer: Lee Chadwick Typesetter: Ruth Gooderham
For further copies please telephone (0115) 951 5957pm or 951 3315 am
Email: Ruth.Gooderham@Nottingham.ac.uk