

Institutional Case Study update The University of Nottingham

Sharing Institutional policy and practice on personal Development Planning (PDP)

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A. Key Developments since the original document was written

1 Institutional Context

Under the University of Nottingham's new Learning and Teaching Strategy for 2002-2005, further development work on the personal and academic records scheme is expressed chiefly through further development to the web-based electronic version. ePARs are increasingly being seen as part of the new student portal in the University (COMPASS) and specific objectives include the following:

- Piloting the use of ePARs within the environment of the student portal to promote student learning and personal, academic and skills development and to enhance integration with careers information
- Customising the functions to meet academic and support needs specific to joint honours students and taught postgraduate students and to provide early professional development for part-time PGCE students
- Developing skills mapping for students, including recording student learning and skills enhanced through work experience, both voluntary and paid.
- Evaluating and enhancing PDP processes to facilitate transition into the University for widening participation students
- Reviewing PDP practice in the University based on action research carried out with year 1 students in at least 5 discipline areas in 2004-2005, the first cohort in which some students will have used the new DfES Progress File for 16-19 education

2. Progress

Ten Schools across a wide range of disciplines are piloting the ePARs system, involving about three thousand staff and students in 2002-2003. The web-based system will have been developed by autumn 2003 to the point where any other School which wishes to use it may take it up; but there is no institutional compulsion to move from paper to IT. Meanwhile, paper-based

PARs schemes are fully implemented for first-year and second-year undergraduates.

3. Review of University guidelines

During 2001-2002 there has been some reconsideration of the University quality framework for the personal academic records schemes across the University, in the light of feedback from staff and students. The guidelines in the Quality Manual have been revised and are attached as Appendix 1. The main changes have involved:

- drawing clear boundaries between the parts of PARs schemes which must be delivered through the personal tutorial system and those parts which may possibly be covered through other provision, according to the preference of individual Schools
- providing for Schools in Science and Engineering, which have a tradition of group tutorials addressing some of the objectives of PDP, to operate on a minimum of two rather than three one-to-one review meetings per year, when explicitly complemented by group meetings focusing on PARs-related activities.

4. Promotional work

Promotional work in 2002-2003 is focusing on work with students. Student feedback has been gathered on the user-friendliness of ePARs to feed into the enhancement of the system during 2002-03. Work to promote the general concept of PARs and its potential value to students includes a year-long programme of activities organised by the University's Students' Union, involving both students in general and specifically the student course representatives on staff-student committees in Schools, informing students and encouraging them to participate fully in evaluating and further customising PARs schemes within individual disciplines. In addition the PARs Implementation Manager led a discussion of the benefits of PARs and PDP, at a Students' Union Forum.

5. Related policy development

The implementation of the PARs schemes has given rise to discussion about the role of the personal tutor and the interrelationship between provision for academic and personal support for students within academic Schools and that provided by a wide range of units across the University in areas such as study support, counselling, halls of residence etc. Partly as a result of the PARs initiative, the University Teaching Committee and Student Affairs Committee appointed a working group on personal and academic student support which, between January 2001 and July 2002, conducted a review of provision across the University, drew up and consulted upon proposals for University policy in this area, which have now been adopted. The role of personal tutors emerged from this process as of key significance. The role of the PARs

scheme in underpinning it has been inscribed in the policy, as shown in the extract attached as Appendix 2.

6. Strategy for implementing policy

The PARs Implementation Group (PARsIG) reports to University Teaching Committee. The group continues to meet to oversee the roll out of the scheme through each undergraduate stage and to steer the developments of the ePARs scheme in relation to the development of the student portal. Time is being allowed for the undergraduate scheme to become embedded. Individual Schools are initiating pilot schemes for postgraduate students.

As the earlier reference to the content of the new University Learning and Teaching Strategy indicates, the current emphasis in development work is very much in the area of integrating extra curricular activities, paid work and work experience of all kinds into the PARs scheme which, in its first phase, focussed fairly exclusively on academic progress, review and planning. The current development work is focussing on graduate skills and involves collaboration with the University Careers Advisory Service (especially in relation to work experience) and the Higher Education Active Communities project team, in relation to capturing students' learning from volunteering experiences and supporting students in planning and reflecting on their volunteering to enrich their ability to develop career pathways.

7. Costs

The post of the PARs Implementation Manager is funded directly by the University. Development work, both pedagogic and technological, is funded partly from a National Teaching Fellowship. Further funding to continue to support two full-time web developers on the on-going ePARs development project has come through a mix of external project funding, learning and teaching strategy funding and Higher Education Active Communities funding.

8. Practice: examples of how policy translates into practice at subject level

In addition to the four examples of practice appended to the original case study, our most recent subject-level development of ePARs is for use by the PGCE students and the newly-qualified teachers based in the partnership network of local schools set up by the University's School of Education. This development translates the national policy on PDP into practice which is interesting for two features in particular:

- (a) it provides an example of PDP for work placement
- (b) it has a focus on the implications of changing from a paper-based system to a Web-based system.

A full account can be found in Appendix 3. Key points to summarise here include:

- Advantages of the link with Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
 - The achievement of continuity from PGCE into NQT was received enthusiastically. Users reported a significant increase in motivation to engage with the system when the link with the full perspective of career development is apparent.
- Advantages of using C&IT for work placement, reported back by users:
 - Usefulness of enhanced communication, especially 3-way: between the individual, their University-based tutor and their work-based mentor
 - Usefulness of bringing all relevant materials together into one organised space in which the young professional can work on his/her professional development
 - The more professional feel brought to the PGCE course and NQT induction process by use of IT on a level comparable with that used in other professions.
 - Value of having a private area for work done in preparation for meetings, records of CPD activities and for storage of material related to completing formal documentation and including lesson plans, etc
 - Ability to develop iteratively and in a formative way formal/final documents/reports which previously were largely retrospective and summative
 - IT makes an evolving text possible, reflecting a developing process which is educationally preferable and also an improvement in terms of managing the work involved
 - IT system is institution-wide, a 'whole college' system; beneficial in achieving equal entitlement provision of student support
 - Convenience: Reducing paper mountains and photocopying; saving time; being able to log on from home
 - Easy to share good practice (via the 'opt to share' facility in the private notebook area)
- Perceived disadvantages of using IT
 - That the system might exist in isolation from the learning process, i.e. you could have evidence of the PGCE system

operating fully but no evidence of real student development:
what counts is quantity and quality of experience on placement

- The system must facilitate face-to-face dialogue between tutor and student, not replace it.
- Reasons for retaining paper reported by users:
 - Concern as to whether working on screen would allow as good an overview as one can get by spreading out a whole range of papers on a table
 - Concern that the completion of outcomes from a key review meeting on screen, as part of the meeting process, might be too clinical and might close off a valuable reflective process.
 - The current statutory requirements assume that paper will be used. Hard copy inputs will also be the preferred format for lesson observation comments for many mentors for some time to come.

B. Current or potential impact of emerging policy drivers on the development of PDP practice

1. Student Volunteering

The University's bid to HEFCE for special funding under the Higher Education Active Community fund included the following, as one of the three main objectives:

- To support student progress and the development of key transferable skills achieved through voluntary activities by recording them on the University's web-based personal academic records (ePARs).

The Institutional role of the PARs scheme in relation to volunteering was expressed in the bid in this way:

Voluntary activities provide volunteers with valuable experience that develops transferable and interpersonal skills. Part of the HEACF funding will be used to integrate these life skills into the existing academic-led PARs system. Recent development of the PARs concept includes a web-based ePAR funded through the University's learning and teaching strategy. HEACF funding will be used to extend this development beyond its currently limited academic focus in order to:

- Support student progress in extra-curricular activities through the development of key transferable skills

- Encourage students to reflect and take ownership of their learning and development and propose action plans.

2. Technical Developments

The University's commitment to portals technology is helping to drive the further development of the ePARs system, although a major area of discussion in the short to medium term will be the relationship between the ePARs system, which is in itself a small portal, and the development of functionality within the student portal as a whole. The ever-increasing integration of increasingly sophisticated C&IT systems is also enhancing the role of ePARs. As a range of VLEs is developed across a number of Schools in the University, the role of the supported PDP process in helping students on an individual basis to take responsibility for their learning and manage their interactions with electronic resources is clearly needed.

3. Widening Participation

As part of the Newcastle-Nottingham Internet-PARs Project 2000-2002, practical work was begun locally to explore ways of harmonising pedagogy and technology between HE and 16-19 schools and colleges. A brief report on the project work is available in Appendix 4.

This strand of the project is being continued in 2002-03 with Widening Participation funding. The objective is to focus on PDP processes and build partnerships with all 16-19 providers in the city, to enhance transition into the University. Points of common interest, shared by local education authority colleagues and the University's Widening Participation team, include:

- Co-ordinating the introduction of the new DfES Progress File materials at 16-19 (in the paper version) with the Nottingham City Passport (web-based) and the further development of the University's ePARs.
- Evaluating a New Entrant Profile function in ePARs as a tool at transition
- Developing models of academic and personal student support for 'gifted and talented' students both pre HE and in HE

Appendix 1

2002 revision of University guidelines on PARs schemes

University requirements for the provision by Schools of personal support for students

A. Context

1. Students throughout their courses interact personally with a range of people from academic Schools and service departments across the University. The strongest relationship will be with the student's School (or in some cases academic department or division within a School). It has long been University policy that each student is assigned to a personal tutor. The number and nature of interactions with people from outside the School will naturally vary widely according to circumstances.
2. The long standing requirement that each School should operate a personal tutor system has been supplemented by the requirement that, from October 2001, starting with at least all first-year undergraduates in 2001-02, every School's system must include a Personal and Academic Record (PAR) scheme. This is part of the implementation of a national policy, following a recommendation of the Dearing Report, that progress files should be developed for all students.

The basic principles underlying progress files as applied in Nottingham are that there should be procedures for periodic, constructive reviews of each student's overall academic progress, plans and development and a record of that progress maintained jointly by the student and the University.

3. As a minimum, the processes and documentation (paper or electronic) set out below must be provided. It is important to note that while some of the activities listed can only be conducted at one-to-one meetings, in the case of the others it will be for the School to determine how the specified objectives are to be met, and this may or may not involve use of the personal tutor. Furthermore, there is no expectation that all of the matters listed will be addressed at any one meeting with a tutor. There is an overriding need for the arrangements within the School to be clear.
4. Each School should, as is the case with all its processes, take steps to monitor the effectiveness of its arrangements for the provision of personal support to students.

B. Required Processes

1. Through personal tutoring.
There should be three or more scheduled personal meetings, between each student and his or her personal tutor each session; however, where one-to-one meetings are complemented by group meetings directed to the

same overall objectives the specified minimum is two. In addition, provision should be made to enable students to contact their personal tutor as necessary outside the formal schedule of meetings, for example to inform the tutor of and obtain appropriate advice relating to any matters that may affect his or her academic progress. Backup arrangements should be available to cover urgent matters where the personal tutor is not available. The scheduled meetings should, overall, provide the following opportunities:

- (a) to monitor and review the student's progress across his or her programme of study;
- (b) to discuss the profile of the student's assessment results for each stage of the programme (i.e., normally, for each semester and for the academic year);
- (c) to check whether there are any personal or academic matters that may affect the student's academic progress; and to enable the student or tutor to raise any matter of concern.

[Note. It is entirely for the student to decide what personal information he or she wishes to disclose and how that information may be used. On the other hand, the student must also be advised that personal circumstances can only be taken into account by examination boards and the like if the circumstances are disclosed.]

- (d) to provide appropriate support in relation to the student's career plans.

[Note. The role of the personal tutor here will vary according to the discipline and the individual circumstances. It is reasonable to expect personal tutors at the least to ensure that students have given some thought to their future career and to be able to advise, if asked, on the sources of specialist information and advice within the University. It is the general expectation that the personal tutor will normally be willing to act as a referee if requested to do so by the student. Further guidance on the provision by the University of careers advice in the light of the QAA Code of Practice is in the course of development.]

2. Through personal tutoring and/or other means

Arrangements also need to be in place to deal with the following matters. The means by which these matters are addressed are to be determined by the School. These may, for example, include provision of a course handbook, personal or group tutorials, academic classes, special events, or combinations of these.

- (a) provision of information concerning the content and structure of the course and concerning access to support both within the School and elsewhere in the University;
- (b) provision of academic guidance and support; this will include guidance concerning any academic choices, e.g. of modules, projects/dissertations and academic pathways;

- (c) recording students' module and other academic choices;
- (d) recording of any specific activity required by professional or statutory bodies;
- (e) encouragement to the students (a) to reflect on their learning experiences and the development of their knowledge and skills inside and outside the curriculum; (b) to set themselves specific and realistic targets; and (c) to record their progress;
- (f) provision, where appropriate, of guidance concerning careers.

C. Required documentation

Each student will be provided with information about the University, the School and the course. This will normally include the provision of a course handbook or the equivalent. In addition, each student should have a personal academic record. Information should be included or provided for inclusion in the record as follows:

1. Information about the Schools' arrangements for personal support
 - Introduction
 - Time chart/calendar of events, including arrangements for meetings with personal tutors
2. Information about the student and his or her course
 - Introductory information – first year students only
 - Student contact details – all years
 - Course of study, including a record of module and other academic choices – all years
 - Mark transcripts – all years.
3. Records of one-to-one meetings between personal tutor and student
 - Topics for discussion as specified by the School (in consultation with their students); these may be supplemented by tutor and student
 - Any documents prepared by the student for discussion at the meeting (e.g. reflections on his or her learning experience)
 - Agreed records of the outcomes of personal tutoring.

[Notes. It is recognised that in some circumstances, none of the topics set by the School for discussion for a meeting may be appropriate for a particular student at that time. A record for both tutor and student should be made of any action points arising from the meeting, and of any information that the tutor and student agree may be needed for future reference (for example, information concerning the existence or nature of personal circumstances that the student may wish an examination board to take into account). There is no requirement that a record be made of every interaction between student and personal tutor.]

4. Academic feedback
 - Copies of any formal written feedback provided to students on aspects of their academic performance

[**Note.** It is understood that feedback will commonly only be available on paper.]

Any other information can be added to the tutor's/School's copy of the record by agreement between the tutor and student.

D. General considerations concerning record-keeping

1. The Data Protection Act 1998 gives rights to individuals in respect of personal data held about them by others, including the right of subject access. This right applies to both manual and electronic data and entitles an individual to receive a copy of all the information which forms any such personal data.
2. Where confidential information (i.e. information given in confidence or data of a sensitive nature) is given by a student to a member of the University staff, then the extent of any permissible disclosure should be agreed with the student. (In limited circumstances the University can be required or authorised by law to disclose confidential information other than by agreement with the student; in any cases raising such issues, advice should be sought from the Registrar's Department.). Separate guidance is provided by the University on the writing of references for students.

Appendix 2

Extract from the operating statement attached to the University policy statement on personal and academic student support, 2002

Support for Learning and Development

1. Each School should have a personal tutoring system and should publish guidance about it for staff and students.
2. All personal tutors should be members of academic or academic-related staff, other than in exceptional circumstances.
3. Personal tutors' responsibilities to undergraduates should include the following:
 - to provide each student with the opportunity to meet his/her personal tutor within the first two weeks of his/her first semester of study, (or within the first term in the case of students whose attendance is less than 4hrs/week), and within the first two weeks following a change of personal tutor
 - to help each student to make regular reviews of academic progress and plans, according to the agreed procedures within the School, and, increasingly, to take responsibility for his/her own learning and development inside and outside the curriculum
 - to provide the first port of call for any student experiencing difficulties adversely affecting his/her ability to work
 - to respond to students in difficulty by providing constructive advice on any implications for the student's course and by directing the student, if necessary, to the appropriate specialist services, including the School Disability Liaison Officer.
4. Schools/Departments should plan and provide opportunities for academic and personal development meetings between all undergraduates and their personal tutors, including one-to-one meetings, and for relevant material to be recorded as the basis of students' personal development planning. The provisions described in this paragraph and in paragraph 3 should be integrated and underpinned in each School by a Personal and Academic Records (PARs) scheme, developed by the School to incorporate its existing good practice, meet the guidelines for PARs set out in the University Quality Manual and reflect the culture of the discipline. It should be the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure that adequate provision is made overall and this should be monitored by University Quality Audits.

Appendix 3

ePARs development for PGCE students and newly-qualified teachers (NQTs)

Introduction

The School of Education at the University of Nottingham had been providing all PGCE students with a paper-based Record of Professional Development folder (RoPD), which was developed by the School in line both with the University's policy on Personal and Academic Records and with the requirements of the Teacher Training Agency. The students use the documentation within this folder to provide evidence of their progress through the PGCE course, towards the attainment of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The process embedded in the RoPD is valued because it encourages reflection on professional development and the setting of future development targets. A cumulative series of tutorials, with the University tutor and/or school-based mentor, involving target setting and action planning, lead to the completion of the Career Entry Profile (CEP) (Note: Jan 03 *CEP currently under review*), a pivotal document which the students take into their first post as an NQT.

The paper process lent itself very readily to the ePARs model currently in use at the University, with the addition of further facilities, including a specific Target Setting and Action Planning tool, a Student Logbook, a Career Entry Profile and also the ability for school-based mentors as well as University tutors to participate in the electronic process. The School of Education staff members were keen to try out the system, with the provision that the look and feel of the paper documentation was reflected in the online version.

Similarly, for the second stage of the process, one of our pilot schools had a well documented and tightly-managed induction process for the NQT year. Since the induction mentor currently held the bulk of the paper records, the belief was that NQTs, subject mentors and induction mentors alike would benefit from the availability, processing and centralisation of data that a web-based application could bring to this system. A series of meetings was held with school staff to gain a thorough understanding of both the statutory requirements and valued practice in the school. This information base was tested through discussion with (i) School of Education staff, (ii) Induction mentors, NQTs and advanced teachers from two further schools, including one trialling the use of the DfES Progress File materials in preparation for threshold progression.

The school's practice was strongly driven by statutory requirements and the primary objective was to record the delivery of appropriate support and training to NQTs by the senior staff in the school. The documentation was very much a matter of public statement: it included records of teaching observation, where the teacher's classroom performance was checked

against a list of standards, complemented by records of target setting, the support and resources required, and progress review.

We chose to focus on just a few essential parts of the existing process, as there was not sufficient resource within the project to mount the entire system on the web, and to complement these with some support for reflective practice by the NQT, making mentor-NQT interaction not just the source of a public record but also a platform for a more private developmental process for the NQT. It seemed appropriate to provide the NQT with a means of making reflective records and of assembling a portfolio of evidence, as a resource upon which to draw for the formal review events. For example, the NQT is required to observe more experienced teachers teaching -- it would be useful to provide a framework within which the NQT could capture the value of these sessions. We wished to allow the NQT to carry forward from their PGCE year not only the CEP but also the Notebook/Logbook and the CV development materials.

Issues to be explored in the course of the development

Meeting users' needs – as identified above

Demonstrating value added by C&IT over paper

The content of the PGCE web tools was taken directly from the existing paper-based Record of Professional Development (RoPD) in use by the University of Nottingham School of Education. A major question about the PGCE system was: What are the advantages of using the web? Does the shift from paper to IT bring a net gain?

IT resources in schools necessary to support use of the systems

School A was well equipped with IT equipment and all staff had laptops. School B was lent two laptops with a view to enabling one-to-one mentoring to take place elsewhere than in computer labs.

How far the new systems might improve the take-up of the Career Entry Profile (CEP) in the NQT year

At the end of the PGCE year the partly completed CEP is meant to be carried forward, completed by the NQT when taking up their post in school and reviewed further during the NQT year, with mentor support. In practice, the TTA has found that the take-up of the CEP in schools so far has been relatively low.

Data Ownership

Postgraduate Certificate of Education students, NQTs, University Tutors and school-based mentors who participated in the trials were made aware in the training sessions of the transparency of the information within the system between student or NQT and tutor or mentor, with the exception of the student 'Logbook' area, which is a private area for the student or NQT. Both the PGCE-ePARs database and the NQTPDP database are maintained on

servers at the University of Nottingham. Access to the web system and subsequently the databases, is via secure, authenticated login.

Overview of the system

Via authenticated log-in, PGCE-ePARs and NQTPDP are able to determine the 'user type' of the person requesting access to the web pages. PGCE-ePARs has three main user areas:

1. School/Departmental Senior Tutor – who, amongst other things is responsible for creating Personal Tutor/Tutee partnerships, and determining the appropriate tutorials which should be scheduled for any particular course/year group, together with discussion topics within ePARs, for the tutors/tutees to access.
2. Tutor/Mentor – who determines when he/she is available for a particular scheduled tutorial, thereby permitting the tutee to book an appointment for the tutorial. The system is transparent in that the tutor has access to all items of tutorial preparation and reflection entered into the system by the tutee, and vice versa.
3. Student – as a personal tutee, the student is required to make an appointment to see their personal tutor for each scheduled tutorial. Topics for discussion at the meetings are made available to the student and the student can also add their own items for discussion at these meetings. The Target Setting and Action Planning process is conducted in consultation with the Tutor/Mentor, each individual target being 'signed-off' by the Tutor/Mentor when achieved. The student has a private logbook area where they can create virtual folders and make notes or upload documents to store in these folders. The final tutorial of the PGCE year is devoted to completion of the appropriate sections of the Career Entry Profile – the system allows this form to be completed and updated any number of times and finally printed out for signing. A file extract of the Career Entry Profile can be taken, in preparation for uploading into the NQTPDP system.

In addition to the above-mentioned functional areas, there is also an interface for use by a system administrator, where details of institutional significance are updated, namely semester dates, ePARs Roles and Responsibilities and tutorial information, i.e. scheduled tutorials with respective agenda items, entered by Senior Tutors, can be rolled-over from one academic year to the next.

These user areas are mirrored in the NQTPDP system

1. School Induction Mentor – who arranges the group Induction Tutorial meetings and records their outcomes, and puts together the training and supervision programme for the NQT Induction Year. The Induction Mentor will also record key points from the fortnightly Progress Meetings with the individual NQTs.
2. Subject Mentor – who will also record details of regular progress meetings with the NQT, contribute to the 'Target Setting and Action

Planning' process and may attend the Termly Formal Review with the NQT and Induction Mentor.

3. NQT – the Career Entry Profile uploaded from PGCE-ePARs outlines the individual's strengths and priorities for further professional development in relation to Qualified Teacher Status. It also helps set the foundation targets for the NQT year. In contrast with PGCE-ePARs, there is no tutorial booking system in the NQTPDP system, since the group Induction Meetings and the termly Formal Review are pre-arranged and the key points from Progress Meetings are added to the system as required.

A demonstration view of the PGCE system described above can be seen at this url:

http://winster.nottingham.ac.uk/eparsdemo/default_pgce.asp

Using the system

Five 1-1 tutorials to support the Record of Professional Development (RoPD) for all students are scheduled for specific periods during the academic session. Tutorial appointments and details of preparation and agenda items are available to the student via their 'tutorial diary'. When further ad hoc meetings occur, the student and/or tutor can, if they wish, record notes or action points from these meetings.

Tutors set their availability for each scheduled tutorial within a prescribed time period, and their tutees view a 'snapshot' of this availability. When a tutee selects a suitable appointment time, the tutor is e-mailed with details of the appointment and the student is reminded, two days in advance, of the tutorial booking, again by automatic e-mail.

For each tutorial, the students are required to submit reflective preparation in advance. The student follows the links on the agenda page, entitled 'Areas of strength' and 'Priorities for development', reflecting on these with reference to the 'Standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status' – a link to this document is included in the page for reference.

The tutor can access and view these preparatory notes before the tutorial meeting.

The student can add further reflective notes after the meeting and the tutor can supplement the notes. These notes may then be subject to a two-way signing-off process, if required, between the tutor and student. This will lock the item as a permanent record. Certain schools/departments who currently use ePARs in relation to vocational courses require this as part of the professional development process.

Target setting and Action Planning can be completed on line. Tutors and mentors also have access to this area and can add comments and confirm when a target has been achieved.

A private logbook area is available for the student. Students can opt to share items they have entered/uploaded into their logbook with tutors, mentors and/or fellow students.

The 'My Profile' page provides links to, amongst other areas, the CV building tool and the 'Career Entry Profile', the pivotal document which the students take into their first post as an NQT. When a PGCE student clicks on 'my CV fact file', the next page provides a link to a 'Teaching Experience' section and also to a guidance document: 'Getting Your First Teaching Post'. Clicking on the 'curriculum vitae' button, will e-mail the PGCE student with a draft compilation of their current CV material, which they can then work upon further.

At the end of the PGCE year, the newly-qualified teacher (NQT) extracts the information from the Career Entry Profile into a file to upload into our NQT Professional Development Planning system. The data within this document is reviewed and completed through discussion between the NQT and the school to identify and support the NQT's target setting, action and training plans and support needs throughout their first year in post as a teacher.

The system provides a schedule of group and individual support meetings for the NQT. The first two group 'Induction Meetings' are scheduled. Default agenda items are set by the Induction Mentor, but each NQT can add further topics they would like to discuss.

Fortnightly, one-to-one 'Progress Meetings' are held between the NQT and Induction Mentor. The NQT can add his/her own comments after the meeting – these notes are private to the NQT. As with the PGCE-ePARS system, target setting and action planning are usually discussed with the tutor/mentor. Targets are signed-off by the mentor when complete and the record in the database is locked, precluding any further editing.

The termly 'Formal Review' may involve three parties, the NQT, subject mentor and induction mentor. The tool opens for completion only when all three have identified themselves to the system. After completion, the online document is available in a read-only format to all three.

Outcomes of the evaluation

Staff and students both indicated

- Enthusiasm for the achievement of continuity from PGCE into NQT, implying further continuity into performance management -- there is a significant increase in motivation to engage with the system when the link with career development and promotion beyond the NQT year is apparent. One school commented: *'At present people do not see the CEP as a living document, just something they look at every 3 months, even though the importance of discussing targets is accepted. The electronic system however raises the profile of the CEP and clearly leads into a Professional Development portfolio. It needs promoting as Stage 1 of performance management.'*

- Usefulness of enhanced communication, especially 3-way
- Usefulness of bringing all relevant materials together in one place

Students/NQTs valued:

- Creating an organised space in which the student can work on all the key materials needed for their professional development
- Provision of a private area for work done in preparation for meetings, records of CPD activities and for storage of material related to completing formal documentation
- The more professional feel brought to the PGCE course by use of IT on a level comparable with that used in other professions.
- Running log very useful and supportive to NQTs in terms of logging own support needs.
- Private area, which NQTs could use to store examples of pupils' work and lesson plans.

Staff valued:

- PGCE: School of Education staff value the remote appointment-booking facility, with students in a wide range of schools, scattered across the locality
- They like the ability to agree and sign off revised targets and action plans some time after a scheduled meeting has taken place.
- The opportunity to achieve a greater degree of integration of the University-based and the school-based activities and records, setting up a more active 3-way dialogue through improved communications and having access to shared notes (e.g. of teaching observations) and records at any time
- PGCE: school-based mentors welcome the C&IT because it enhances the developmental purpose of their partnerships with PGCE tutors and students:
For example, the interim and final teaching practice profiles, completed by the mentor, can be built up iteratively through the weekly meetings in school, enhancing reflection, moving forward organically and presenting much less of a burden than in the past when a document of 17pp. had to be completed for each student at the end of the process
- the chance to share documentation remotely with the PGCE tutor appeals to mentors, thinking especially of notes on teaching observations, which each carries out independently of the other at present
- The design of the PGCE system as a quality-assurable guidance system inscribing exactly what should be done when.
- PGCE system is institution-wide, a 'whole college' system; important for achieving equal entitlement provision of student support; also applies to NQT supervision in schools, reportedly very variable and patchy
- NQT system: Reducing paper mountains and photocopying, and saving time: three or four copies of a succession of documents may need to be made and distributed under the current system

- NQT: major support tool for the Induction Mentor with more than a handful of NQTs and subject mentors to organise

The debate about IT versus paper

- the parallel pages of the interim and final teaching practice profile document (paper version) were very much liked and more than one attempt has been made to create an equivalent on screen which will be as satisfactory to use. On the other hand having this document in e-form, again, means an evolving text is possible, reflecting a developing process – educationally preferable and also an improvement in terms of managing the work involved
- The question was asked whether working on screen would allow as good an overview as one can get by spreading out a whole range of papers on a table
- Some colleagues felt that iterative approaches to completing records via IT had a lot to recommend them, but that the completion on screen of outcomes from a key review meeting, there and then, might be too clinical and might close off a valuable reflective process.
- Availability of email contact may work well in training teachers for secondary teaching, but in 3-4 year courses for primary teaching where numbers are large this technology could be very unwelcome to staff who might feel deluged by unwanted emails. One PGCE student suggested modifying the system to make more use of notice boards and less of mass emails, so that students would have the incentive to go into the system more frequently.
- The current statutory requirements assume that paper will be used. Hard copy outputs are needed still for External Examiners and OFSTED. (The system allows paper copies to be printed out when they are needed and does not involve duplication of effort, just presenting two versions of the same thing.) Hard copy inputs will also be the preferred format for lesson observation comments for many mentors for some time (although some mentors are readily experimenting with laptops, where a socket can be found)
- NQTs thought that the IT added prestige to the CPD process and felt more positive about using a coherent, well-presented system, as opposed to something involving lots of bits of paper
- IT makes it easy to share good practice (ref. the opt to share facility in their private notebook area)
- Training school training manager envisaged that the internet format would usefully enable her to log on from home outside school hours

Staff expressed some fears

- That the system might exist in isolation from the learning process, i.e. you could have evidence of the PGCE system operating fully but no evidence of real student development: what counts is quantity and quality of experience on placement
- The system must facilitate face-to-face dialogue between tutor and student, not replace it.

Current objectives as we continue this work

- Explore what sort of/ how much support material, context-sensitive help and exemplification would be helpful to users
- Bring in much more of the PGCE process which takes place in the school
- Address the question of how the system will operate/be used as a source of evidence in relation to OFSTED inspections.
- Pursue further harmonisation of the PGCE/NQT process with the processes of preparing for performance management / threshold promotion, to make the PGCE-ePAR explicitly the first phase of career-long CPD. One PGCE student interviewed thought the system was good for meetings with the School of Education tutor but that the school-based mentor needed more encouragement to add comments. If the system applied to permanent rather than temporary staff (i.e. students on placement), there would be more incentive for the school to prioritise it.
- Integrate lesson observation further into the system, as it is very important for performance management in the longer term.
- Given their small numbers in any one school, both PGCE students and NQTs would like to use the network for peer group support:
 - NQTs would like to exchange experiences over the web with other NQTs in their subject area, elsewhere in the country; they would also like contact with an experienced subject specialist in another school (Possibly link to the LEA database / GTC database to achieve this?)
 - PGCE students on teaching practice would like an email buddy system
 - A more advanced teacher applying for threshold promotion suggested being able to communicate with a mentor who is also a threshold assessor in another region and obtaining feedback
- So far, only secondary teacher training has been addressed; development for primary would involve extending communications to include more tutors, because of the multi-disciplinary nature of primary teaching. But there is less IT in primary schools than in secondary schools and NQT mentoring tends to be more informal, so secondary teacher training is the most appropriate area as first priority.
- So far, the system supports a university School of Education training provider; any distinctive needs of training schools should be explored
- Use notice boards more than bulk emails to students, to attract students into using the system on a regular basis.
- Put even more effort into preparation and induction of staff and students involved in piloting – both PGCE and NQT
- Work out what the NQT can take away from the system at the end of the year. Could they maintain it as ongoing CPD, or would it be wiped? NQTs interviewed would very much like to be able to continue it.

Appendix 4

Transition from 16-19 education into HE: ePARs and Widening Participation

As part of the Newcastle-Nottingham Internet-PARs project 2000-2002 (www.internet-pars.ac.uk), possibilities for pedagogical harmonization in PDP between the HE sector and the 16-19 sector were explored. The University of Nottingham set up a series of activities with four 16-19 institutions in the Nottingham area using the National Record of Achievement and similar schools and colleges in the DfES Progress File Demonstration Projects in other parts of the country. After discussion between teachers and university tutors, the main practical outcome of the feasibility study became a pilot Transition Document, a New Entrant Profile, to build into the ePARs system at Nottingham University.

Account of Developments

It was agreed that the UCAS Personal Statement, useful as it is for deciding university entrance, is not as useful to personal tutors meeting their students for the first time. Students too are keen to write something fresh for the university they are to enter, as the UCAS statement is out of date and addressed to several possible institutions. Both students and university staff feel that the UCAS Personal Statement is extremely narrow and limited in the information it gives to the personal tutor at the student's final destination – i.e. the university at which they begin their HE studies. Students can change a great deal between writing their Personal Statement and taking up their place, especially if they have a gap year, or go to work for a year.

First-year widening participation students interviewed were clear that they would like an early opportunity to make their tutors aware of some matters of a personal nature, e.g. dyslexia, and the baselessness of the common assumption that if a student lives at home, there won't be any problems. This group also knows little about what happens in a personal tutorial, so a series of preparatory questions to answer would be a useful indicator. One student commented that a document completed before term started and sent in advance to a personal tutor would act as a useful ice breaker.

Two trials took place in August/September 2002. A paper version was tried in a social science department, and an electronic version in an engineering discipline. Although both tutors and students involved at the design stage strongly felt that the document should have space, for those who so wish, to mention worries, write about disabilities or disclose other personal details, and should therefore be informal in nature and "user friendly", the project team was advised that, under the new disability legislation, it was necessary to rein back some of the questions. This resulted in a much more formal document. (See Annex 1)

Levels of response

- a 187 out of a possible 191 students in the social science department completed (in great detail) and returned the paper version. There was an access problem, initially, with the electronic version, which makes evaluation more difficult, although 48 students accessed the site between 10 - 23 September and 39 chose to complete the questionnaire. Information gathered from the 9 students who accessed the electronic version but did not complete the Profile shows that various contingencies, rather than concerns about IT and confidentiality, intervened to prevent them.

Continuation Strategy and Associated Activities

The Transition Document is being reviewed by focus groups of tutors and students during 2002-03. Further related work with the University of Nottingham Widening Participation team and the developing Nottingham Passport initiative in the City of Nottingham started in October 2002, creating a partnership of national interest, potentially, by linking Progress File work in both sectors.

Appendix 4
Annex 1 New Entrant Profile
Outline of questions included:

Your email address:
Your school/college:
Date of leaving:

Your course:
Why did you choose Nottingham, and why this course? How do you think learning will be different from what you're used to at school or college?

At University:
As well as the degree – what do you hope to get involved in, both academically and personally, during your time at University? Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

Other interests:
What are your interests and leisure activities? (Put down what you actually do – even if it's watching "The X Files"!)

Voluntary or paid work:
Do you do any kind of voluntary or paid work?

Three things:
Try to specify 3 strengths, 3 skills and 3 qualities that you possess and you think will be useful to you during the next three years.

Since leaving school/college:
What have you been doing since you left school or college?

Accommodation:
Where have you arranged to live?

Anything else
Is there anything else that you'd like to add, any questions that you'd like to flag up for discussion at your first personal tutorial?

Do these apply?
If any of the following apply, please check the appropriate box.

I have used Progress File at school or college

I have studied Key Skills in:

Communication

Application of Number

IT

Improving Own Learning and Performance

Working with Others

Problem Solving

RECOMMENDED INTRODUCTION TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR USE ON THE WEBSITE

This questionnaire is to help your Personal Tutor get to know a little about you before you arrive. It is also designed to get you thinking about your imminent undergraduate career in the light of your aptitude and skills at the present time. Completing and returning this questionnaire is entirely voluntary but it will help “break the ice” at the first meeting with your Personal Tutor, help us begin to plan your undergraduate career and possibly let us deal with any issues that may be worrying you.

SUGGESTED AUTOMATIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF A COMPLETED ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Should you need to make any changes to it, simply repeat the process you followed the first time. Just before the start of term, it will be forwarded to your Personal Tutor. Don't forget the Student Advice Centre number (0115 970 1216) and email address (student-advice-centre@nottingham.ac.uk) if there's anything you need to deal with now.