JISC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Project Document Cover Sheet

PROJECT FINAL REPORT

Project

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PDP4Life
Personal Development Planning for Lifelong Learning

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Final Report

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Many HEIs have developed electronic Personal Development Planning (e-PDP) systems that support the learner through the processes of personal development planning, however, little attention appeared to have been paid to developing frameworks within these systems to enable learners to merge formal and informal records of learning into a single database, to transfer records from one institutional learning environment to another, and to access and manipulate their learner records when not registered within a place of study. PDP4Life attempted to address these issues.

The original five aims of the project were:

1   To work towards the extension of the existing specification for an Individual Learner Record that currently records formal qualifications, in order for it to accept learner generated records of informal learning from local PDP systems.

2   To compare the nature of the formal learner records of PDP4Life partners with those generated by SHELL and work towards establishing common data export and transfer protocols for a CSV file for import into the ioNode system. This will enable PDP4Life institutions to link into the ioNode/database framework when they have appropriate hardware and software .

3   To pilot the ioNode technology through the installation of ioNode at Bournemouth to enable comparison of data transfer between sites by ioNode and VPN architectures and through further roll out the ioNode infrastructure.

4   To establish the extent of local ePDP systems within the PDP4Life partners and encourage further development and sharing of good practice.

5   To raise awareness within the PDP4Life partners of the availability of IMS LIP/UK LeaP compatible ePDP/ePortfolio systems that have been or are being developed within the JISC community and pilot appropriate tools if feasible within the timescale of this project.

The overall approach of the project was to encourage networking between the partners in the SW region to share experiences and practice in PDP and to develop an extended specification for a learner record that merged formal and informal records of learning. A specific focus on PDP for the creative industries (CI) sector was adopted in recognition of the importance of this economic sector to the regional economy and the inclusion of three specialist arts institutions within the partnership.

The main achievements of the project have been the development of a User Specification for an Extended Lifelong Learner Record, a successful test of the feasibility of transferring learner records data securely between institutions and from institutions to a repository using the ioNode technology and research into the perceptions of students, academics and employers on the value of PDP and lifelong learner records.   Development of the ioPortal as a test system for ePortfolios and as a PDP planning tool has also been achieved; it is intended to continue this development during the JISC Capital Programme project, PDP4XL2, which Bournemouth University is also leading.

A highly successful project dissemination conference, entitled *PDP and E-portfolios: listening to the voices of the learners*, was hosted by Dartington College of Arts in March 2006.   The final project conference was held at the Miramar Hotel, Bournemouth, 26-27 April 2007.

1. Background

The context for PDP4Life is the requirement for Progress Files and Personal Development Planning (PDP) in higher education and the development of the regional Lifelong Learning Networks (LLN) in support of learner progression between and through learning stages. Many HEIs have developed e-PDP systems that support the student through the processes of personal development planning at their own site. However, when the bid was being written, little work appeared to have been done on developing frameworks within e-PDP systems to enable learners to merge formal and informal records of learning into a single database, to transfer these records from one institutional learning environment to another, or to access and manipulate their learner records when not registered within a place of study.

The project partners, led by Bournemouth University, sought to address these issues by building on the outputs of SHELL, a JISC funded project in the MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme led by University of Plymouth. SHELL had established the specification and data transfer protocols for the formal records and the transfer of learner records between sites had been achieved through the ioNode technology. A database holding the learner records could be accessed through a generic learner portal. SHELL had also begun to develop the structure and specification for the core elements of the informal learning record in the PDP.

Many of the PDP4Life partners had developed localised frameworks for PDPs and began to realise that interoperability must have a much higher priority if the regional priorities for progression and lifelong learning are to be achieved. This project has enabled the partners to review their PDP systems and contribute to a specification that has the potential to underpin their local development without the need to impose a one-size-fits-all template on individual institutions.

The creative industries (CI) sector is a regional economic priority sector for the SW region, and since several of the PDP4Life partners have high profiles in this area, the project decided to focus on PDP for learners in the creative industries as well as more generically.

2. Aims and Objectives

AIM 1: **To work towards the extension of the existing specification for an Individual Learner Record that currently records formal qualifications, in order for it to accept learner generated records of informal learning from local PDP systems.**

Objectives
1.1   Agreed list, structure and specification of data fields that are IMS LIP/UK LeaP compliant to complement the existing formal record of lifelong learning in the SHELL Learner Record.
1.2   Mapping of partners' local outputs of their institutional PDPs to this specification, leading to its further development.
1.3   Specification of Extended Learner Record to meet the requirements of the Creative Industries including the identification of discipline and vocational-specific issues relevant to learners in the creative industries

AIM 2: To compare the nature of the formal learner records of PDP4Life partners with those generated by SHELL and work towards establishing common data export and transfer protocols for a CSV file for import into the ioNode system. This will enable PDP4Life institutions to link into the ioNode/database framework when they have appropriate hardware and software

Objectives
2.1   Map partners' Student Record System outputs to SHELL CSV.
2.2   Identify record field type and structure in partner PDP/Student records systems (as in WP1)
2.3   Recommend data structure for common mapping framework to IMS (PDP)
2.4   Take action on any mismatched and/or missing fields.
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AIM 3: To pilot the ioNode technology through the installation of ioNode at Bournemouth to enable comparison of data transfer between sites by ioNode and VPN architectures and

through further roll out the ioNode infrastructure within the SHELL partnership through integration with the work currently being undertaken by the SHELL team in collaboration the Plymouth Learning and Work Partnership (PLWP).

Change to original aim: At the start of the project the PLWP decided not to pursue the use of ioNodes so did not continue as a partner.

Objectives
3.1   Installation of ioNodes, associated software, learner portal and portal tools at Bournemouth and two of its partners;
3.2   Identify data to be used for testing. Document user testing programme and simulated history for testing student records
3.3   Testing of data transfer from local SRS systems to Learner Record database.
3.4   Learner data transferred successfully between Bournemouth and Weymouth
3.5   Learner data transferred successfully between Bournemouth and UCY
3.6   Replicated data transfer between Weymouth and Bournemouth using VPN.

AIM 4: To establish the extent of local ePDP systems within the PDP4Life partners and encourage further development and sharing of good practice.

Objectives
4.1   Reports from partners that review the operation of their PDP systems and include case studies for discussion at a partner *Show and Tell* conference in June 2005.
4.2   Identification of PDP issues specific to creative industries learners.

AIM 5: To raise awareness within the PDP4Life partners of the availability of IMS LIP/UK LeaP compatible ePDP/ePortfolio systems that have been or are being developed within the JISC community and pilot appropriate tools if feasible within the timescale of this project.

Objectives
5.1   Partners' reviews of available IMS LIP/UK LeaP compatible ePDP/ePortfolio systems, eg: PETAL, ePET, Skills Profiling Web Service, Interactive Logbook
5.2   Trial of a limited range of e-learning tools by partners if feasible within the time available.

Extensions to the project

The project secured two extension periods. The initial "no-cost" extension period from April to June 2006 enabled the original aims to be completed, including amendments to the ioPortal that were not originally envisaged but were made possible through the activities of other JISC Regional e-learning projects in collaboration with Phosphorix. A formal funded extension from October 2006 to April 2007 was also approved. The activities that were funded enhanced the original project's aims as follows:

Extension to AIM 1:   Further investigation into creative industries employers' views about PDP and LLL Records

Objective
X1.1 Undertake interviews with CI employers to record their views on PDP and Lifelong learning;

Extension to AIM 3: Evaluation of the revised ioPortal

Objective
X3.1 Undertake 4-6 focus groups with students and academic staff to evaluate revised ioPortal and use findings to inform further work by Phosphorix;

Extension to AIM 4: Raise awareness of and share best practice in PDP practice across the regional HEIs.

Objective
X5.1 Plan and organise end of project conference to focus on regional PDP issues.

Extension to AIM 5: Encourage piloting of JISC PDP/e-portfolio tools, including revised ioPortal for the benefit of lifelong learners in the SW.

Objective
X5.1 Establish contact with South West Lifelong Learning Network (SWLLN) PDP Adviser and produce 3-4 case studies of non-institutional lifelong learners in SW who might benefit from use of PDP processes and systems within the ioPortal.

3. Methodology

The project bid had been developed through and was supported by the HE Regional Association for the SW, so the overall methodology was designed to engage all the partners as fully as possible in the project and enable them to contribute their own expertise to the development of project outcomes that would be of value to themselves and the region. However, as a policy initiative, PDP has been left to institutions to decide how to implement it as appropriate to their context, so the project methodology had to be one of learning from partners and providing them with an opportunity to contribute rather than expecting them to implement a standard system.

All partners were invited to contribute to the extension of the learner record (LR) specification, to compare their formal learner records with those generated by SHELL and to contribute to the review of existing PDP activity and ePDP/e-portfolio tools. Subject to this review, and depending on their institutional context for PDP, some partners took part in the piloting of the JISC e-portfolio tools.

The focus on PDP for the creative industries (CI) sector was a developed in recognition of the importance of this economic sector to the regional economy and the inclusion of three specialist arts institutions within the partnership in addition to media departments in the universities.

The feasibility of transferring learner records data securely between institutions and from institutions to a repository was tested by piloting the ioNode technology and comparing it with the use of VPN architecture. This was undertaken by Bournemouth University in collaboration with two of its FE partner institutions, Weymouth College and University Centre Yeovil. ioNode was already installed at Weymouth through its membership of the SHELL project, and two further installations were successfully undertaken at Bournemouth and Yeovil.

4. Implementation

4.1 Setting up the consortium and securing engagement of other regional HEIs

The development of a collaborative bid and the subsequent project activity is likely to be more effective if it builds upon existing collaborative processes and structures, as was the case in the South West. The cohesiveness of the HERDA-SW Teaching and Learning SIG and the support for the bidding process provided by the HERDA-SW Administration was extremely helpful for the initial bid development. Support from the senior management of each partner institution is also critical to securing buy-in from partners, and again, the HERDA-SW Teaching and Learning SIG with its membership of PVCs and other senior managers responsible for learning and teaching, was helpful in this respect. The significance of the project to the Lead Institution was illustrated by the Pro Vice Chancellor Academic of Bournemouth University agreeing to chair the Steering Committee. Finding a topic that generated a strong motivation for participating among partners, PDP, further developed their enthusiasm for supporting and engaging with the project.

The pre-existing relationships between learning and teaching professionals within the partners was also very helpful when moving into the operational phase of the project, it meant that we could quickly identify the right individuals to contact when getting underway with the activities.

4.2 Establishing the Project Team

Finding the right individuals to fill short term project posts is difficult. The project budget allocated funds to a 1fte project manager post and an administrative officer based at the lead site. An excellent administrative officer was recruited without too much delay and the project manager role was divided between two existing Bournemouth University staff. One individual had pedagogic expertise and one had a technical background, which proved to be a strength for the project, since it is essential that effective communications are secured between personnel in IT Systems, e-learning units and learning and teaching units in order to successfully undertake a project of this nature that potentially has a wide impact on many sections of the HEI. The individuals who filled these roles continued as technical and pedagogic advisers to the project when the full time project manager appointed to manage the PDP4XL2 project in December 2006 took over project management for PDP4Life in its final months.   The role of project director was taken by the Head of Academic Services who represented Bournemouth University on the HERDA-SW Teaching and Learning SIG.

Consultancy appointments were established with individuals who had been involved in the SHELL project to undertake the development of the PDP specification and further ioNode development. A service agreement was established with Phosphorix to cover the installation and testing of the ioNodes and further work packages were agreed to cover the extension period activities.

Another change to the original staffing plan was to make three 0.2 appointments instead of one 0.5 Creative Industries PDP adviser. After initial visits to each of the three CI colleges, with a maximum distance 183 miles between Bournemouth and Falmouth, it became apparent that one individual was unlikely to be able to achieve the necessary outcomes, whereas one person in each college could function far more effectively. The change was agreed by the JISC Programme Manager.

The project evaluator role was taken by the University of Bristol. Bristol also took on the role of hub co-ordinator for several of the SW HEIs that were not originally part of the consortium, but expressed interest in being involved after it started.

4.3 Starting work on the project

Monthly team meetings were scheduled and the full project plan with workpackages was developed. With such tight timescales it was important to have self-contained workpackages wherever possible, to minimise the cumulative effect of any delays. A detailed Gantt chart of project activities and timescales helped to identify where any problems might arise and how they could be minimised. We found that it was possible to align our objectives into parallel developments that enabled us to accommodate some slippage in some of the objectives without a negative impact on all the rest.

The SHELL MLE project was designed to finish in June 2005, while the Del projects were scheduled to begin in March 2005.   It was at the first of our team meetings that our University of Plymouth partner told us that the SHELL project was behind schedule and that the ioNodes were not fully tested and signed off. This delay to the start of Aim 3 was accommodated within PDP4Life as work on other objectives could still get underway.

Members of the project team made initial visits to each of the partners to clarify roles and expectations and a Memorandum of Agreement was distributed. It was helpful to identify those specific individuals within each partner organisation who were able to contribute authoritatively to the development of the extended LR and PDP processes from a learner/pedagogic perspective, and those who had responsibility for IT infrastructure and data transfer processes involving student records systems. It would have been useful to begin scheduling these meetings as soon as the bid was approved to avoid the inevitable delays, but they were essential to developing the collaborative approach. During these visits each partner was invited to agree the activities it would undertake to secure the funding allocated to each partner for their engagement with the project. This funding was to cover the time of the senior manager and the institutional PDP specialist needed to engage with the project activities, help with setting up focus groups and taking PDP forward in their own institution, through for example, web development of their own PDP system. They were paid against claims for work completed. Following these visits, further detailed discussions about the PDP systems in use in each partner and the output records that might be associated with them took place.

4.4 Legal issues and risk assessment

Two useful discussions between the team and JISC consultants took place, one on risk assessment and the second on legal issues arising from the project. The risk to project outcomes was minimised, as identified earlier, by writing objectives that could be enacted independently of each other. The legal discussion raised useful issues but as we were planning to use dummy student data to test the ioNodes, we did not have to put in place processes to accommodate the use of live records.

4.5 The development of the extended learner record specification

A briefing paper circulated to the partners by Dr David Croot, the project's PDP Adviser who had worked with SHELL, identified some of the key issues being raised by the concept of lifelong learner records, namely the retention of records arising from PDP processes, the size and location of data storage repositories or e-portfolios, authentication and access to records once learners are no longer at an institution and the need for tools for manipulating and presenting the data.

Dr Croot met with partners' PDP staff with the intention of identifying the current outputs from their local PDP systems with a view to adding fields to the SHELL specification. However, he found in most cases that partners were just beginning to implement PDP systems that were paper-based initially, rather than electronic. Nevertheless, there was still sufficient information available from these activities and from other CETIS/CRA reports to compile a specification that was mapped to the draft UKLeaP standards (Croot and Rourke 2006). This was passed to Simon Grant for feedback on it and on future directions. Simon Grant discussed the draft with the project managers and his recommendations (Grant 2006) are included in this report and informed our extension activities.

4.6 Testing data transfer through the ioNode and unanticipated developments with the ioPortal

At the time PDP4Life started, the final acceptance testing of the ioNodes had not taken place, and was not completed until July. Negotiations also had to take place with the University of Plymouth over continuing access to the SHELL server and database during the life period of PDP4Life. These issues were eventually satisfactorily resolved. Data were satisfactorily transferred securely between Bournemouth and its partners, with test procedures validated for the project by Dr Terry Rourke.

The involvement of the supplier of the IoNode technology, Phosphorix, also needed managing, to ensure that the company was not stretched beyond capacity through being adopted by four of the Del projects in this programme. Support for Phosphorix was subsequently arranged through JISC. The three other projects using ioNode were each responsible for developing an additional tool in the original portal developed for SHELL and by the time we had developed our specification, the potential for building on our experience of articulating PDP processes and incorporating a PDP process tool with the ioPortal concept was feasible. This was not an outcome that had been envisaged at the start of the project due to the time restrictions, but was developed within the three month no-cost extension.
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4.7 Bringing people together

The partners have shown considerable enthusiasm for engaging with this project since it addresses an issue that is of concern to all of them because of the sector-wide requirement to make PDP available to all HE students from 2005/06. It was important to ensure that they all understood the scope of the project and that it would not provide a fully operational e-portfolio for them by the autumn 2005. It was also important to bring partners together to share best practice in an area where there is wide and legitimate variety of approach. The first major event for the project partners was the 'Show and Tell' conference organised at the University Centre Yeovil in June 2005. In addition to participants in the project, presenters or users of a range of e-portfolio tools were invited to attend to demonstrate their products, including PebblePAD, PROFILE, VMAP, LUSID and ePET.

The second event was the end of project dissemination conference that was hosted by Dartington College of Arts in March 2006. This two day event, entitled *PDP and E-portfolios: listening to the voices of the learners,* enabled the partners and the project team to disseminate details of their activities and invited guests from three other regional e-learning projects presented their findings. Contrasts and similarities were identified that contributed to the identification of potential future

developments. The evaluation was very positive, with participants reporting that the event was: *'Really informative'; 'extremely useful, food for thought'* and that the *'Presentations were well organised, informative and gave an overview of developments both national and regional. An interesting opportunity for dialogue'.*

The final end of project conference was held in Bournemouth on 26-27 April 2007. Although a smaller event than the Dartington conference, it was equally well received. One participant declared it to be *"the best JISC conference I have ever attended, providing answers/strategies for important issues."*

Despite the early enthusiasm of the two FE College partners it was difficult to secure continued engagement with the project with one of them, mainly due to a change of personnel. Further efforts to secure engagement were more successful during the extension period between January and April 2007 when further key contacts at the colleges were identified.

4.8 PDP and the Creative Industries

Following the appointment of the three 0.2 creative industries PDP advisers, one each in AIB, Dartington and Falmouth, work began on identifying the issues relating to the use of PDP and the potential for lifelong learning records in this subject area. The original aim was to amend the generic learner record to include fields identified as being specific to the PDP processes and outputs of the CI learner, but this was not possible in the time available. However, a very rich set of data was collected from students, employers and academic staff through the focus groups reported in the next section. The results of these were used to inform developments identified in the three month extension project. We had intended to engage with the ADM HEA Subject Centre as a vehicle for disseminating our findings but did not have sufficient feedback to offer at that time.

4.9 The users' perspective

A series of focus groups with students, academic staff and employers was planned in order to identify perceptions of the value of PDP and lifelong learner records to these groups. Some of these were within any discipline, and others were specifically held with CI participants. It was anticipated that these insights could be used to amend the lifelong learner record specification in the light of use cases. Ten focus groups in all were held, involving fifty-six participants. They were organised by the representatives within each partner and facilitated by the evaluation team from the University of Bristol. The team debated whether or not greater clarity would be achieved if the ioPortal was used to explain the concept of lifelong learner records, since those with experience of SHELL has suggested that it would, but eventually decided that it had the potential to confuse students, especially those from CI, who might be distracted by the lack, in their eyes, of creativity in its design.

There was a slight delay in setting up the group meetings due to staff illness and personal circumstances, but the initial findings were reported at Dartington (Mullings 2006). The aims of the focus group meetings were to:

- Identify existing PDP practice amongst students;
- Use student ideas and experiences to help develop extended learner record;
- Identify positive and negative issues and priorities for extended learner record;
- Contribute to understanding of issues and challenges of a lifelong e-portfolio.

Generally, students found it difficult to project into the future regarding their lifelong learning needs. They were very focused on their CV for their first job and only want to present their best work. They did not see the point in retaining past work, especially from school. The CI students reported that hard copy and a physical portfolio are very important to them. These students were more familiar with the concept of self-evaluation and reflective practice than students generally, since it was often an important element of their course. None of them really grasped the concept that the learner record was in their control, to choose to share with others or not. There was concern expressed at the idea of a state-controlled 'big brother' style lifelong learning e-portfolio.

The employers surveyed reported that they would not be interested in the detail in the PDP record, since they would not have time to read more than one side of A4. Academic staff still needed to be

convinced of the value of PDP more broadly, since it appeared to involve additional work for both tutors and students.

A full report based on an analysis of the transcripts from these meetings is available on the project website. The perceptions from all three groups of stakeholders are ones that need to be challenged and changed if the value of PDP for lifelong learning is to be fully recognised in the longer term.

4.10 Enhancements to the ioPortal prototype for PDP4Life

The main activities undertaken through the project's extension periods were the enhancements to the ioPortal prototype and the evaluation of these with a series of focus groups with a number of partner institutions.

By the end of the first phase of the Del projects, Phosphorix had developed several aspects of ioPortal functionality through work with other projects such as EELLS and the iceBox that became available for PDP4Life to take advantage of during its extension phase. It was agreed that a prototype ioPortal would be developed that had a PDP4Life 'skin' and featured systems that would:

- enable data inputs relevant to PDP to be loaded into an inbox as a trigger for personal learning and development activities by the learner using the PDP guidance located within it;
- provide a facility for locked categories of information and read-only documents that cannot be altered by the learner.

This prototype was evaluated using 5 focus groups that included about 120 participants drawn from academic staff and students at 4 of the partner institutions. They were all attended by a representative from Phosphorix, enabling direct input to the company as part of the upgrading of the ioPortal. Main findings related to PDP and lifelong learner records were similar to findings of the previous round of focus groups. Participants were concerned about security of data, copyright protection and the longevity of the host provider. Views about the utility of the ioPortal prototype displayed to them were mixed; some thought that it did not add anything over systems they already had, for example, Blackboard; other participants would like a feature that enables employers to provide feedback on their CVs; useful feedback was also provided on terminology and accessibility issues in the design. These comments are being considered in revisions to the ioPortal taking place through PDP4XL2.

5. Outputs and Results

Even with tightly defined aims and objectives, in what was initially a thirteen month pilot project, more issues are likely to be raised than solved, especially in such a contested area as PDP. During the course of our project, the discussions we have had with our partners, with students and employers in the South West, and in addition, with colleagues from other regions and from the Netherlands, leads us to believe that the specification of PDP processes and outcomes, which is potentially unlimited, is likely to remain contentious for some time to come. Our Dartington conference demonstrated the variety of challenges associated with PDP and e-portfolios, from the tightly specified competences of health care to the individuality of the creative industries. Our Bournemouth conference at the end of the extension period again included presentations from both the CI and health areas that heralded the move into the next phase of development of the ioPortal in partnership with Phosphorix through PDP4XL2. It also raised the issue of the relationship between e-portfolio systems and next generation technologies that are already having a significant impact on learners' attitudes to their use of technology for PDP.

PDP4Life has made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on PDP through the development of the draft specification which is one of the major outputs. The draft specification was mapped to UKLeaP, but Simon Grant observed in his feedback that with reference to interoperability standards for e-portfolios, "there is not yet any clear agreement between opinion leaders in the field". He also suggested that PDP4Life and other similar projects should work together to develop consensus on how to work together towards interoperability.

The further development of the ioPortal prototype and our contribution to incorporating guidance on PDP processes within it was an unexpected output achieved through the funded extension from October 2006-April 2007. Further development and evaluation is being continued through the work of PDP4XL2.

We took the ioNode, an output developed by the earlier JISC project SHELL, and demonstrated that its use for secure data transfer of learner records from one location to another is replicable. We have not yet demonstrated that it is possible to export locally derived e-PDP data and transfer it to the lifelong learner record.

We have raised the profile of PDP processes and approaches in the Creative Industries and contributed our findings about PDP for this domain into the debate about the value of PDP through the extensive dissemination activities undertaken during 2006.

We have raised awareness of PDP approaches and tools in the South West and encouraged the sharing of information between HEIs through case studies. One partner piloted PebblePAD and another used PROFILE, adding to our knowledge base of these tools.

Our dissemination activities have been numerous and wide-spread. In addition to the project website and project conferences we have disseminated details about the project though conference presentations and publications as listed in Appendix 1. We have also given three reports to HERDA SW Teaching and Learning SIG in March and July 2005 and September 2006 and one presentation was given to HERDA SWICT in June 2005.

Three participative partnership events have been organised:

Show and Tell. University Centre Yeovil, June 2005. Attended by c.25 participants.

PDP and E-portfolios: listening to the voices of the learners. Dartington, 20-21 March 2006. Intended PDP4Life end of project conference. Attended by c. 25 participants.

PDP and E-portfolios: listening to the voices of the learners (2). Bournemouth, 26-27 April 2007. The actual end of project conference attended by 20 participants.

6. Outcomes

AIM 1: **To work towards the extension of the existing specification for an Individual Learner Record that currently records formal qualifications, in order for it to accept learner generated records of informal learning from local PDP systems.**

It was anticipated that, as a result of the extended specification, the principal outcome for this aim would be enhanced opportunities for learners to develop and retain a personal, location-independent record of their learning achievements. They would be able to integrate the formal records of their qualifications with their informal personal records and retain and manipulate evidence associated with their PDP in support of their lifelong learning. This specification would be developed from the PDP records generated by students using the PDP systems of the partners. In reality, the partners' use of PDP systems in most circumstances was at an early stage of development, and often paper-based rather than electronic, so the development relied on other published standards.

Some significant groundwork was achieved during both the first year and the extension period, particularly in the contribution to PDP for different professional areas. Our research findings demonstrate that there is still much work to be done to persuade employers of the value of PDP, particularly in the workplace. This is an ongoing theme of PDP4XL2 which is continued with reference to the creative industries and initiated with health professionals in the SW region.

Important links have been made between the project and the *Lifelong Learning Networks* in the SW. The PDP4Life partner contact for the Open University has maintained contact, on behalf of the project, with the two LLNs in the South West. Both LLNs place emphasis on PDP for learner

guidance and development. The South West Lifelong Learning Network (SWLLN), led by Bournemouth University, specifically has as one of its main aims to "incorporate the outcomes of the SSW JISC PDP4Life e-portfolio/PDP project to facilitate standardisation of format and portability for learners in the SW to underpin effective IAG+S" (information, advice, guidance and support).

AIM 2: To compare the nature of the formal learner records of PDP4Life partners with those generated by SHELL and work towards establishing common data export and transfer protocols for a CSV file for import into the ioNode system.

The outcome associated with this aim was anticipated to be the ability to demonstrate to other institutions the possibility of linking into the ioNode/database framework when they have appropriate hardware and software. This was achieved.

AIM 3: To pilot the ioNode technology through the installation of ioNode at Bournemouth to enable comparison of data transfer between sites by ioNode and VPN architectures and through further roll out the ioNode infrastructure.

The outcomes resulting from this aim were anticipated to be enhanced opportunities for learners to move between education providers whilst maintaining access to their individual Learner Record and increased understanding among the JISC community of the advantages and disadvantages of VPN-based data transfer compared with ioNode-based architecture. This is an area where it is difficult to generalise, advantages or disadvantages are still to be determined in light of the specific needs of the networks, institutions and learners.

AIM 4: To establish the extent of local ePDP systems within the PDP4Life partners and encourage further development and sharing of good practice.

This aim achieved the outcome of generating more knowledge about PDP systems and approaches among partners in the SW and also revealed some broader approaches to learner support, for example in dissertation supervision. It also encouraged closer collaboration between information management and learning and teaching professionals. The IT professionals learnt more about PDP and the learning and teaching professionals learnt more about the technology and structure underlying e-portfolios.

AIM 5: To raise awareness within the PDP4Life partners of the availability of IMS LIP/UK LeaP compatible ePDP/ePortfolio systems that have been or are being developed within the JISC community and pilot appropriate tools if feasible within the timescale of this project.

All the partners gained greater understanding of current ePDP/ePortfolio systems, but their readiness to adopt any of the systems was limited by their institutional contexts. This restricted the opportunities for partners to trial open source products with user groups but case studies on the use of PebblePAD and PROFILE have been developed.

Extension Period Aims:

Extension to AIM 1: Further investigation into creative industries employers' views about PDP and LLL Records

Additional interviews were conducted with CI employers and the report was completed by Peter Symons of the Arts Institute at Bournemouth. It is available for consideration on the project website.

Extension to AIM 3: Evaluation of the revised ioPortal

A series of focus groups were held in February and March 2007 to evaluate the ioPortal prototype as indicated above.

Extension to AIM 4: Raise awareness of and share best practice in PDP practice across the regional HEIs.

This aim was fulfilled by the end of project conference in Bournemouth in April 2007. The presentations are available on the project website.

Extension to AIM 5: Encourage piloting of JISC PDP/e-portfolio tools, including revised ioPortal for the benefit of lifelong learners in the SW.

This activity was undertaken by the Open University and SWLLN and two case studies were reported at the Bournemouth conference. They are available on the project website.

7. Conclusions

This project has been a useful vehicle for raising the profile of PDP approaches among the Higher Education Institutions in the SW. It has been interesting to note the diversity of these approaches and the different stages of development across the partners, from single departmental initiatives to institute-wide implementation. This has obviously had an impact on each partner's engagement with a project like this.

It has demonstrated that more work needs to be done to explore the issues relating to PDP and its support for learners' transition between FE and HE in the region. Further work on this has been identified that could be carried forward through the Lifelong Learning Networks as they begin to consider and develop their systems for PDP.

Specific benefit for the education community has been achieved by highlighting the perceptions of stakeholders in Creative Industries towards PDP. This can inform curriculum development and careers guidance within HE programmes that support students' progression into employment in this sector.

A contribution has been made to the JISC community's conceptual understanding and practice in relation to standards and interoperability for PDP, but this needs to be shared with and developed further through the CETIS Portfolio SIG. The project has also enabled the development of the ioPortal prototype as a mechanism for the testing of attitudes to e-portfolios and e-PDP. The outcomes of PDP4Life are being taken forward through the work being undertaken for PDP4XL2 between October 2006 and September 2008 which will see further development of the ioPortal prototype.

8. Implications

The following implications arise for the JISC community from this project:

More work needs to be undertaken, perhaps through longitudinal evaluation of PDP use, to develop use case studies of lifelong learners in the SW in order to understand how PDP and its associated records will be used by them. This may also inform the ways in which the records might be used by IAG professionals to guide lifelong learners;

Employers' views of the role of PDP for vocational, lifelong learners, for example in Foundation degrees or for CPD, also need further investigation.

This further research will in turn inform issues around the development of the lifelong learning repository, its location, access and the type of potentially unlimited amount of PDP information that could be stored. Grant suggests that together, SHELL, PDP4Life and the related ioNode work "provide a possible foundation for future projects relating to exploring and prototyping a regional consortium approach to an independent body fulfilling these requirements" ie: of providing safe, secure and private storage and backup, Web Services interfaces to institutional PDP systems and controlled access to the data by third parties (Grant 2006:4).

A further suggestion from Grant arising from his review of the Specification was an investigation into the feasibility and nature of unsupported PDP through the ioPortal, including the potential of features such as blogs, wikis and other Web 2.0 social technologies. This debate is informing further development of the ioPortal in PDP4XL2.

9. Recommendations

As more of the developmental projects supported by JISC are rolled out to the sector through HEFCE and its e-learning strategy, it is important that adequate timescales are provided for developing bids and for undertaking the implementation projects, as these may frequently need more consultation with a wider group of stakeholders than the original development did.

There also needs to be sufficient time built in to JISC programme time-tables to allow the outputs from one set of projects to be fully developed and tested before being taken forward and implemented by another set of projects.

Suppliers of open source software applications that are rolled out from developmental projects into implementation projects need to be supported by JISC.

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Appendix 1

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