



ROYAL SOCIETY OF CHEMISTRY

Education Issues

Number Twenty-Five

Progress Files for Higher Education

November 2003

Education Issues is an occasional series of publications written for RSC members who, although not directly involved in education, are interested in developments within the education system.

Further copies of this and other publications in the series may be obtained from: The Manager, Education Communications, Education Department, The Royal Society of Chemistry, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BA; email education@rsc.org The publication can also be downloaded from the RSC website at www.chemsoc.org/learnnet

**www.rsc.org
www.chemsoc.org**

Registered Charity N° 207890

Introduction

Progress files are intended to become an important part of a graduate's record of achievement on leaving university. Recommendation for progress files arose from the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997 (the Dearing and Garrick Reports)

'...institutions of Higher Education should, over the medium term, develop a Progress File. The File should consist of two elements:

1. a transcript recording student achievement which should follow a common format devised by institutions collectively through their representative bodies;
2. a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development'.

A Progress File Implementation Group was established, comprising representatives from the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) (now Universities UK and including Universities Scotland), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCoP), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN). In consultation with other bodies – including the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA), the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR), a set of guidelines was produced in February 2001 (www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/progfileHE/guidelines/progfile2001.pdf).

Progress Files for Higher Education

A progress file contains the following elements.

- The transcript is a record of a student's learning and achievement, provided by the institution – eg a list of modules completed by the student and grades.
- A student's personal record of learning and achievements, progress reviews and plans. This can provide material to produce CVs and other documents for employers, admissions tutors etc.
- Processes to help students to think about their own learning and achievement, and to plan their own personal development. This process is known as personal development planning (PDP).

Progress files help make the outcomes, or results, of learning in higher education more explicit, identify the achievements of learning, and support the concept that learning is a lifetime activity.

Transcripts

The Transcript provides a student's record of learning and achievement. and should also provide students with a record of their learning while they are studying. This should help students monitor and reflect on their progress, and plan their further academic development.

Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Personal development planning is a structured and supported process where students have the opportunity to think about their own learning and achievement, and to plan for their personal, educational and career development. The primary objective for PDP is to improve the ability of students to understand what and how they are learning, and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning.

Some of the benefits of PDP include helping students become more effective independent learners, understanding how they are learning, and how to apply this more broadly in their general study skills and career management. Personal goals are important and PDP can help students to express their personal goals and assess progress towards their achievement, as well as developing a positive approach to the concept of lifelong learning.

The RSC Undergraduate Skills Record

The Undergraduate Skills Record (USR) is a framework for skills recording developed by the RSC and fulfils the PDP aspect of the progress files for HE. The Record provides students with a framework to reflect, assess, and plan for their future skills development. Adopting the USR into undergraduate programmes provides evidence that the PDP aspect of the progress files for HE is in place within the department.

This document provides uniform provision for all undergraduate chemical science students and can be adopted into a range of departmental set-ups.

There are many benefits to students, employers and university departments.

- For departments the resource is flexible and is designed to fit into a range of set-ups. It is student led, cost efficient, uniform and subject specific.
- All students benefit from the same subject specific resource.
- The resource benefits employers as it is tailored to chemical scientists. This means that employers have a framework to look out for and a basis for personal interview.

The USR is designed to keep the administrative responsibility of the department to a minimum and also allows for flexibility when being implemented into different departments.

The USR is available to all students in the chemical sciences. Hard copies are available from the Education Department email: education@rsc.org
Tel: 020 7440 3348, an electronic version of the USR is available at www.rsc.org/ugskills

(Universities UK, Universities Scotland, the Standing Conference of Principals, the Learning and Teaching Support Network and QAA are working with others to help HE institutions and academics develop progress file policies and practices.)