NUPAD

Personal & Professional Development for Researchers

Northampton's Unified Personal and Academic Development

Charting your Research Journey

Monitoring, evaluating, and reflecting on personal progress are important aspects of both academic learning and professional development. These processes foster critical self-awareness and understanding of the transferability of higher level skills, and contribute to interdisciplinary learning. These are qualities highly valued in workplace organisations.

Your Training Needs

An important aspect of your research degree will be the postgraduate training you will undertake, which will help give you the skills you need to successfully carry out your specific research project, and also provide you with general skills common to the work of all research students. This training may be provided via workshops run by The Graduate School, whilst other training may be gained through experiences related to your research project, such as attending conferences.

You will be encouraged to monitor such development in an Academic & Transferable Skills Self Audit and Development plan, started during induction. This is based on the Research Councils UK Joint Skills Statement, and it forms an important part of your developing academic profile.

'It is accepted as good practice for students to reflect on their learning, supported by frameworks developed by institutions for recording personal development. Research students may find it useful to use the PDP tools provided by their institutions to record their personal progress and development, including reference to research and other skills.' QAA

Keeping a researcher's log, portfolio or notebook

Keeping an ongoing record of your experiences, insights, and achievements will enhance your ability to track progress, and later to present your work effectively to others. A personal and professional development record, in whatever format you choose, will help you obtain the most from your post-graduate studies, organise your ideas, and identify key milestones in your research. You may have kept such review records for your Continuing Professional Development in your work role.

Resources available to support you in these processes, including the Academic & Transferable Skills Self-Audit, and many useful links are available from the NUPAD web-site http://pdp.northampton.ac.uk/Research_Files/res_intro.htm. Some examples of templates to prompt your notes are included in this pack.

You can use these resources or develop your own system to:

- ✓ Keep a record of your personal /professional development and the progress of your research
- ✓ Monitor any changes in the direction of your work and use as a focus for discussions with your supervisor
- ✓ Keep organised - therefore aiding your academic progress!
- ✓ Identify insights from a range of formal and informal learning activities, and note follow-up actions or ideas
- ✓ Identify and bridge any gaps in training needs
- ✓ Create records useful for crucial stages such as registration, transfer and your Annual Reviews
- ✓ Build a resource for presenting yourself and your work to interested audiences, whether in academia or in job selection

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is an important skill which is strongly encouraged for the professional development of staff in most workplace organisations, and valuable for managing your career progression. It involves taking time to think through the process and impact of your experiences, and identifying your feelings, reactions and insights. Such reflection can help you resolve uncertainties, make decisions, and tackle future situations more effectively. Again, guidance on this is available on the web pages.

'I came across My Pad in the PhD induction program but did not pay much attention at the time. I had no idea how much I was missing! I use it now to record the conferences, seminars and workshops I have been to, information that would possibly get lost. It is also a fun way to reflect about my development. For me it was really difficult to keep track of what I was doing; progress in PhD is not exactly 'measurable' as in earlier stages of education. My Pad helps me to see where I started, what I am doing and plan what I must achieve'
Mellina Aston, PhD research student, CeSNER team, School of Education

E-portfolio: a private e-portfolio facility in NILE MyPAD is offered to all students.

Find your e-portfolio space by clicking on the PDP tab – top right – on your NILE welcome page, and then selecting MyPAD e-portfolio from the left box.

More Information...

Learning journals and Reflective Writing: Jennifer Moon
http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/printableDocs/Good%20Practices%20in%20T&L/learningJournals.pdf

Links to students' webfolios: http://escalate.ac.uk/2550 from Julie Hughes, National Teaching Fellow, University of Wolverhampton. Moving forward with e-portfolios – includes more examples of learner and teacher e-portfolios and reflections: http://pebblepad.wlv.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=883648&type=webfolio

Emma Purnell's research portfolio: http://pebblepad.wlv.ac.uk/viewasset.aspx?oid=307006&type=webfolio&webfolioid=647748