

NUPAD Personal Development Planning

Northampton's Unified Personal and Academic Development

You may have already experienced ways to keep track of your progress at school, college or in the workplace - in fact most employees are expected to take note of their development and keep personal records of achievements and goals, so it's a habit worth developing!

Northampton's Unified Personal and Academic Development (NUPAD) consists of support and materials designed to help you keep reflective notes and to plan for your next step. It includes activities within your course programme and meetings with your personal tutor which help develop essential skills for study and work.

Thinking about what you do makes you better at doing it, so potentially leads to improved grades! Recording your skills and achievements, both from study and other activities, will prove really valuable when you come to apply for jobs or placements - employers like to hear examples you can describe in detail!

NUPAD - What's in it for me?

- ✓ You'll become more aware of the skills you already have
- ✓ It will help you identify and develop skills you need for academic and future success
- ✓ It will focus your thinking about possible career options
- ✓ You'll be able to explain your progress on paper, e.g. CVs, and verbally, e.g. in interviews
- ✓ It will help you work out what you want to achieve, and how to go about it
- ✓ You'll become more independent and confident
- ✓ It will help you build a source of information and evidence for future job and course applications

Actions you should take:

- ▶ Attend tutorials and take preparation seriously
- ▶ Reflect on comments on marker sheets and take action as required
- ▶ Practise making links between academic learning and skills developed elsewhere: placements; part-time jobs; voluntary activities
- ▶ Make use of your MyPAD e-portfolio space on NILE

'It has made me think about what my strong points are, how I have grown as a person, and how I can use the skills gained at university within the working world - it has been a very worthwhile process.'

How to make the most of NUPAD and MyPAD e-portfolio

Getting started...

- ▶ Meet your personal tutor and check out NUPAD arrangements for the year - some NUPAD activities may be included in course tasks/assignments, or special workshops
- ▶ Use the NUPAD webpages* to prompt your thoughts; save and upload completed tasks to your MyPAD space
- ▶ Personalise your MyPAD space - 'Welcome to MyPAD' gives ideas on organising your material in your e-portfolio
- ▶ Try the sample templates in your MyPAD space for tracking progress and compiling a CV
- ▶ Note key suggestions for improvement from assignment front sheets and use these as a checklist for future tasks

'I found the application form for this work experience opportunity much easier to complete because all the examples of my skills were already in my PDP.'

- ▶ Find a regular routine for updating your notes. It could be once a week, or when you hand assignments in or get them back
- ▶ Share selected material from your MyPAD space in personal tutorials or invite your tutor to view relevant records of your progress
- ▶ Link other personal web activities with your academic and career development on MyPAD - to help build an holistic picture of where you're at and where you're going.

Most employers will ask you to do something similar, so getting into the habit now will give you a head start. What's more, as you keep track of your own progress, you will really be aware of how you're changing and developing - a great confidence boost!

What to include...

- ▶ Modules studied, assignment descriptions, and grades; attendance on other courses
- ▶ Discussions about choices you make and the reasoning behind your decisions
- ▶ Meetings with your personal tutor, together with any notes or documents
- ▶ Leisure/social activities, with details of any positions of responsibility, e.g. Student Rep.
- ▶ Work-based experiences - include paid, voluntary and informal roles
- ▶ Lists of useful contacts, phone numbers, links to websites
- ▶ Thoughts about career options, and what you need to do to get there
- ▶ Interviews, dates, who you talked to, what happened, your reactions
- ▶ Don't forget casual chats with friends or relations - that's often how we make up our minds, or sort out problems. If it made a difference, or made you think, jot it down.

You may find the G.R.A.S.P. leaflet inside this pack helpful for what to include in your e-portfolio.

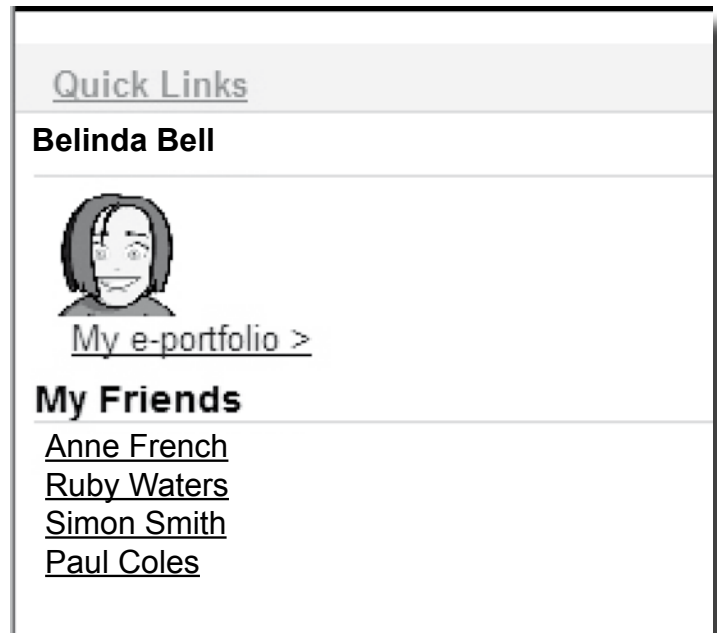
**Keep track of your plans.
Develop your CV.
Improve your chances!**

MyPAD e-portfolio

A space to record your Personal and Academic Development


Welcome to your own personal virtual space at The University of Northampton. Use this area to keep track of your personal and academic progress whilst studying here. Keep an online journal by adding a blog, or develop a series of web pages which can interlink using the wiki function. Everything you add is personal to you, and cannot be seen by anyone else unless you choose to share it. If you already have an online space, then why not add a link to it? Any type of file can be included - just add them by uploading to a wiki or blog.

Your own e-portfolio space, MyPAD, is part of your account on NILE (Northampton's Integrated Learning Environment).



Quick Links

Belinda Bell



[My e-portfolio >](#)

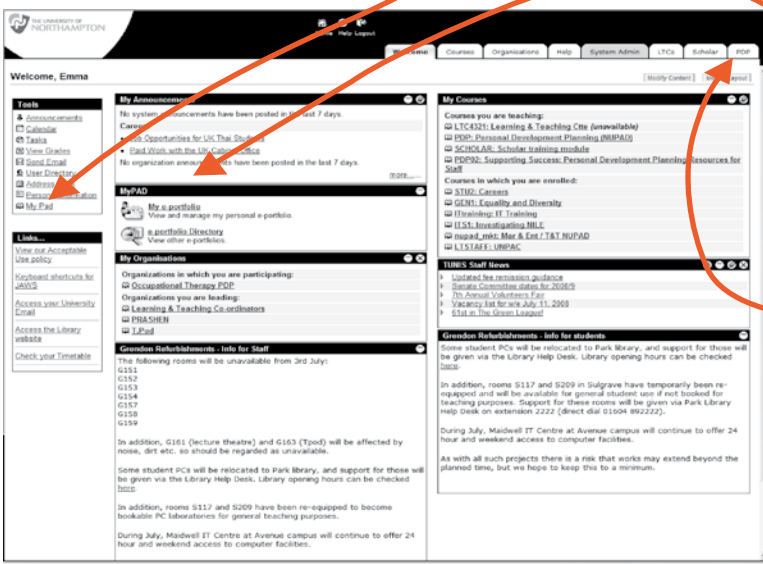
My Friends

- [Anne French](#)
- [Ruby Waters](#)
- [Simon Smith](#)
- [Paul Coles](#)

Log in to NILE:
<http://nile.northampton.ac.uk>
using your NILE username and password.

Access MyPAD by clicking on the link from the bottom of the Tools menu or by using the links in the MyPAD box on the Welcome page.

MyPAD can also be accessed from most courses on NILE, as well as from the PDP (Personal Development Planning) tab on NILE.



How to use your MyPAD e-portfolio

Getting started

You can build up your MyPAD e-portfolio by adding sites.

There are three types of site:



This is an online journal, suitable for recording thoughts, progress, reflections, ideas and plans. Posts are listed in reverse chronological order.



This is a collection of web pages which you can link together, suitable for gathering and presenting information for a particular purpose or audience, such as an application or a personal statement. You can upload files and multimedia to both blogs and wikis and add hyperlinks to other work you have on the web.



Creating a site from a template will enable you to make use of standard content, such as the CV template or skills audit. Once you have created a site from a template you can edit it in the same way as for a blog or a wiki.



A blog can have rss enabled, which will allow people to be automatically alerted of any updates. In order to use this feature the blog must be made available to anyone in the world.

Sharing and other features

Once you have created a site in your MyPAD e-portfolio, you can choose to share it with others, such as a tutor or other students on your course, for example to contribute to discussion on a study topic. Use the **Sharing** option in the Toolbox to invite an individual, share with everyone or with those on a course in NILE. You can choose whether to allow others to View, Edit, Comment, or Export.

Exporting

You can access your e-portfolio from anywhere through the internet so long as you have an account on NILE. However, you can also export individual sites or the whole e-portfolio so that they can be viewed off-line. To do this, use the **Export** option in the Toolbox. You will be prompted to save a zipped version of the files and this will need to be extracted and opened in an internet browser. It is worth bearing in mind that the navigation is not exported along with a site, so it may be helpful to add this in to your pages.



Your MyPAD space contains both your own personal e-portfolio facility and a directory for quickly linking to other people's e-portfolios. You can select names from course lists, tutors or search by last name. You can also add people as friends, so that you can link to their sites more easily.

Gather Reflect Analyse Select Present

A toolkit of prompts to support e-portfolio

Gather...all your evidence - you have a lot to offer!

Your achievements, motivations, and strengths

Start with your CV if you have one, then begin to add in more detail about your previous studies, your jobs, your skills, your achievements and experiences...

- ▶ What makes you who you are and what can you offer?
- ▶ Write down six positive words to describe yourself
- ▶ 'Curriculum vitae' means the story of your life. List everything you would want to be included.

GRASPING OPPORTUNITIES

You could also start **gathering** information on the range of career opportunities, work experience options, and useful networks. Use the Careers Service web pages, Careerplan and Graduate Prospects. Why not create a wiki to store your useful resources?

Your experiences

- ▶ Have you gained an award or commendation for anything?
- ▶ Any visits or travel experiences which have given you challenges or insights?
- ▶ What do you do in your spare time? Activities don't have to be paid to be worthwhile, and can develop valuable qualities.
- ▶ Think about a typical day/shift in your part-time/holiday job. Break it down into the tasks and the skills required.
- ▶ What about your social life - have you ever initiated or organised an event?

Reflect...on your most significant experiences

Moving from the What? and When? to the Why? and How?

- ▶ Select an experience which made you feel good about yourself. What were the characteristics of the situation, your behaviour and the attitudes of others involved, which contributed to make it a positive memory?
- ▶ Select an incident from your work, study or life experience - perhaps something which made you feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied in some way - and brainstorm words describing your fears, hopes, impressions, reactions, attitudes.
- ▶ Alone or with a partner reflect on these events.
- ▶ Highlight anything you have learnt about yourself.
- ▶ Try this for several critical incidents.

Reflection is about...

Making sense Standing back
Repetition Deeper honesty
Weighing up Clarity
Understanding
Making judgments

Some questions to prompt reflection:

Something happened - what was really going on? How did you feel? Did you express your feelings? How? Did you do anything else at the time as a result of this incident?

So what? What were the consequences? Now what?

Did your responses enable you to gain anything positive from the situation? Did you learn anything: a) about yourself? b) about handling other people? c) about that situation - would you react differently another time? How? Why?

More prompts and pointers can be found at <http://www.services.ex.ac.uk/cas/employability/students/reflective.htm>

Analyse...your key skills and aptitudes, and note any gaps

Look over the material you have gathered so far:

- ▶ Your achievements and successes, plus any struggles and disappointments
- ▶ Your reflections on events or incidents and what you have learnt from them
- ▶ Comments and feedback from others: tutors, supervisors, mentors, friends

Make a mind map demonstrating your significant life-learning.

Highlight the most positive experiences, perhaps linking them together to develop a profile of your own learning achievements. What insights about yourself have you gained from both positive and negative experiences? Make notes in your e-portfolio.

Can you see any themes or patterns emerging? Perhaps situations or tasks which bring out your strengths? Or circumstances in

which you are most confident and successful? Are there any factors which make it harder for you to achieve?

How can you use this information about yourself and how you learn:

- ▶ To be more successful in your studies (better grades)?
- ▶ To build more effective relationships, e.g. at work?
- ▶ To make more effective applications?

Note some action points in your e-portfolio.

Select...those significant key learning experiences

'Tell me about yourself' is often an ice-breaker at an interview - if you were given 3 minutes to outline those experiences which are most significant in shaping your life so far, what would you definitely want to include?

Building your evidence bank to demonstrate your transferable skills

Record your skills evidence from your different learning experiences - formal and informal. Use the skills audits or checklists on the NUPAD website.

Choose examples for each of the skills and qualities frequently targeted by employers to select graduates. Use the checklist 'Building your bank of examples' on the NUPAD website.

Expand your example demonstrating each skill area by analysing and describing each activity in more detail: **Situation - Action - Result.**

Targeting your audience

You will need different information for different audiences, e.g. postgraduate course selection, a placement abroad, funding for a business opportunity, on-line graduate recruitment. Your selected evidence needs to be made as relevant as possible, but you can practise squeezing useful evidence from a range of experiences.

GRASPING OPPORTUNITIES

Your research into career options should help you narrow down the choices - lots of help with career decisions is available on Careerplan and Graduate Prospects.

Present...yourself effectively and with maximum impact

Where do your main skills and strengths lie? What are your 'Unique Selling Points' - that mix of aptitudes and qualities which make you who you are?

Try composing a Personal Profile for your CV or covering letter summarising:

- ▶ Your particular strengths, skills and qualities
- ▶ Key aspirations and goals
- ▶ Motivational factors justifying these objectives.

Look back at your developing CV again and adjust it to reflect the insights gained through building your e-portfolio. Revisit each item to ensure you have squeezed the most relevant points from each of your learning experiences. Highlight your key

development at each stage, avoiding repetition, and ensuring each point is positive. Use positive verbs and adverbs - the careers service holds a list of these.

For a specific application, link all the information you have gathered on the company, the role/programme, and the job description/specification, with your targeted CV and consider how this matches the representation of yourself. Can you **transfer** what you can do to meet what they need? Put yourself in the interviewer's shoes, and remember the competition!