

Extramural but not Extracurricular: Revealing Hidden Learning through the Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) in Architectural Education

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This paper considers the introduction of a Personal Development Portfolio into our assessment for architectural education. When revising out undergraduate course structure we moved to a fully integrated model, where assessment was based on a portfolio or 'body of work' produced during a ten-week studio project. These projects introduce, develop and integrate understanding and ability of the key knowledge and skills of the curriculum; design, communication, realisation (technology) and contextual studies. Each year of study also includes one unit where professional knowledge is also assessed. Alongside these 'learning outcomes' we introduced a PDP: a separate report documenting and reflecting on everything that falls outside the predicted aims of the project. The notion of a PDP has been widely promoted by in Higher Education, particularly in connection with vocational courses, and is usually interpreted as 'Personal Development Planning'. As such the PDP is a bridge to the notion of Continual Professional Development (CPD) in practice. Our PDP is an assessed element of the student portfolio. The aim was to give academic value to various learning opportunities that students engage in that would otherwise not be captured by academic assessment. These enhance and extend the curriculum and as such are not 'extracurricular' but 'extramural'; beyond our limited course content and core assessment objective. Firstly, there are those opportunities the course expects students to engage in. These include the usual extramural academic activity such as guest lectures, field trips (other than site visits), and exhibition visits. In our own institution we also organise regular collaborations with other courses and these also required recognition for participation and achievement beyond the usual assessment criteria. Secondly there are occasional opportunities that develop at short notice or outside our set curriculum or timetable. These include opportunities to exhibit students work off campus, engage in live projects or host workshops. These are often initiated by an approach from a third party to see if the course would be interested in some form of participation. Neither of these groups of opportunities are unique to our course, but we were seeking a way to value and encourage student engagement. These activities frequently require students to develop their 'soft skills', especially collaboration and organisation, both key employability skills, as well as those qualities employers often cite; motivation, enthusiasm, initiative and entrepreneurship. There are many ways in which the PDP has enhanced the course provision. The course has found useful ways of applying the PDP report, for instance in encouraging student to visit the Venice Architecture Biennale during the long summer months, allowing them to choose to attend for a brief few days or as

part of an extended European journey. Students have also documented their involvement in the interview of prospective students, usually by helping to organise some studio workshops. The course has been able to team up students to help external 'clients'. A third aspect of the PDP was to capture student-initiated opportunities. In this paper I wish to give particular emphasis to what opportunities students have pursued under the 'catch all' assessment of a PDP. For instance, some learning opportunities that happen outside the taught term structure can be submitted, including travel, internships or work experience, and personal creative practice. Activity might broaden and deepen the students' individual specialist skills and knowledge, including photography, printmaking, or other media not taught or required by the core curriculum. In a tightly programmed institution there are no electives, so the PDP encourages motivated student to 'elect' themselves into specialist creative practice to broaden their skills, often by developing projects through personal contacts on other courses. Students have found many ways to demonstrate their broad engagement in their architectural education. Weekend trips to cities, buildings or exhibitions can be included. Enhanced sketchbooks, drawing or life drawing skills demonstrated. Software and digital skills can be developed. Students on international exchange submit their broader experience, including international travel and broadening their cultural knowledge. This paper considers the opportunities that the introduction of the PDP has facilitated and examines how students have engaged in the creative interpretation of its content. How is the core curriculum enhanced by PDP activity? What further potential might the PDP explore? Is there parity in opportunities for all students? How is the value assessed and what limits are there to a submission? What range of activities do they submit as content? What places do students find to learn? What creative practices do they deploy? How have students individually benefited from the PDP?

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1: Third year architecture students at Peterson Bricks, Copenhagen, 2015.



2: Layers of Bournemouth, a rammed earth sculpture by artist Briony Marshall, technical assistance from architecture students, 2018.



3: Pop-up container exhibition for BEAF 2019 (Bournemouth Emerging Artist Festival).



4: Third year student install a pop-up exhibition at a local gallery, 2019.



5: student assistant at a school architecture workshop, 2019.