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Paper

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Encouraging Lifelong Learning by means of a Web-based Personal and Professional Development Tool

The RAPID Progress File (<http://rapid.lboro.ac.uk/>) is a Web-based tool designed to enable students in the Construction and Civil Engineering disciplines to record, monitor, and build upon their personal and professional development. The original (Construction Management) version of the RAPID Progress File was developed at Loughborough University as part of a DfEE funded project, 'Recording Achievement in Construction' (1998-2000). The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) now hosts this particular version and is promoting it as part of its Professional Development Programme (PDP). Under further funding from HEFCE, through the FDTL Phase 3 programme, the 'RAPID 2000' project is currently engaged in developing other discipline specific versions of the RAPID Progress File. These include a Civil Engineering version, based on the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)'s Core Objectives, and a more generic version appropriate for use by students/graduates engaged in the Graduate Apprenticeship scheme. During the current academic year (2001-2002) the RAPID Progress File is being implemented in nine Higher Education Institutions involving over 2000 students.

This paper describes how the RAPID Progress File can encourage the process of lifelong learning amongst Engineering students and graduates. The RAPID Progress File is designed to enable students maintain a record of achievement and to audit and develop skills compatible with the competence requirements of leading Professional Institutions by engaging in a process involving planning, reflection and evidence gathering. Each version of the RAPID Progress File has approximately sixty skills classified as Key, Personal and Professional, or Technical skills. There is a strong correlation between these skills and those skills, attributes and qualities of an engineer, as defined by the recently published Subject Benchmark statements in Engineering. This paper will demonstrate the strength of this correlation. In addition, this paper argues that the RAPID Progress File not only offers academics in the engineering disciplines a means of explicitly addressing the skill needs of their undergraduate students but of developing and encouraging the habits of lifelong learning.