

ePortfolio concepts

for information technology and
teaching and learning support staff



'ePortfolio provides a dynamic learning environment for students to document and reflect on relational outcomes of their learning. Often assessment tasks and their criteria focus on the... products of their learning [and] fail to capture and emphasise the learning that occurs through... engaging in authentic tasks.'

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– Jude Smith, Learning and Teaching Consultant, Creative Industries Faculty, QUT



The use of ePortfolios in education can involve a range of stakeholders: beyond the students themselves and the teaching staff, there may be learning designers, academic developers, ICT managers and policy makers. The audience for an ePortfolio might also include employers and members of professional bodies. This is one of a series of guides aimed at these diverse stakeholder groups.

As a member of the information technology or teaching and learning support staff, you might be considering how you can assist teachers to develop student-centred learning activities to enhance the quality and sustainability of learning outcomes. With the growing use of eLearning in universities and colleges, many teachers want to increase their understanding of ePortfolio-based learning.

What is an ePortfolio?

This guide uses the term 'ePortfolio' to refer to an electronically stored collection (or archive) of a student's experiences, achievements and artefacts, together with their reflections on learning.

Why develop an ePortfolio system?

There are many different potential purposes for ePortfolios, so you need to be clear about the reasons that your institution, or perhaps a specific teacher, wants to introduce ePortfolio based learning activities into the curriculum. ePortfolios can support a range of activities, including study or employment

applications, transition between different life stages, assessment of professional standards or providing evidence of continuing professional development.

In the academic context, an ePortfolio may assist learners with their personal development by providing a single, organised repository from which they may:

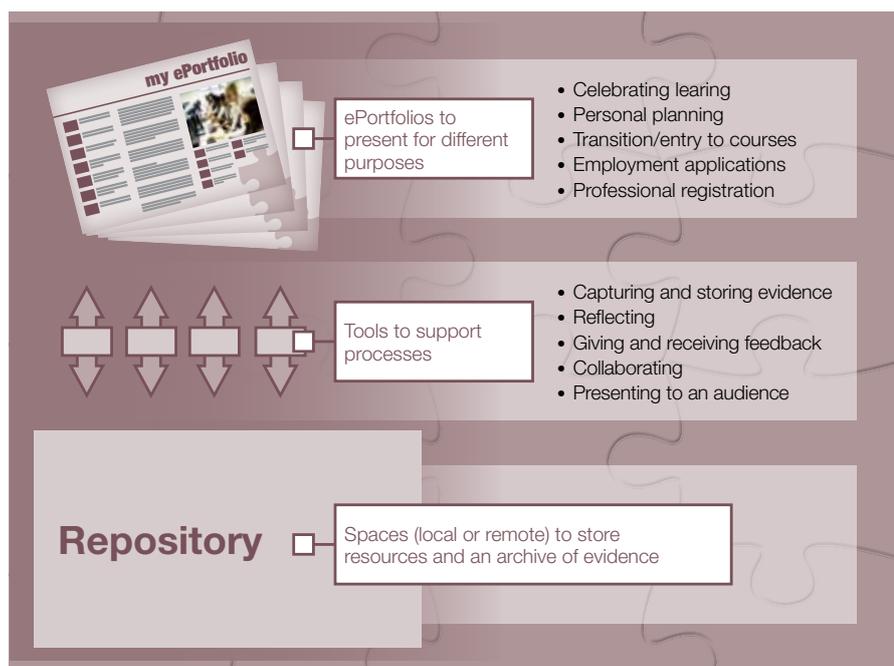
- Develop an holistic overview of their learning/experiences/development beyond individual subjects/classes
- Understand their learning and experience in terms of graduate attributes and employability skills

- Extract evidence to represent their learning and achievements, for example to develop selection criteria responses
- Identify skills gaps through review of and reflection on their ePortfolio content
- Plan and set their own personal development targets.

ePortfolios can also assist teachers to gain deeper, more rounded insights into their students, enabling the provision of rich individualised academic advice.

What teaching approaches are ePortfolios best suited to?

An ePortfolio is not only a product, but more importantly also a process, allowing students to move beyond *what* they have learned to consider *how* they have learned, and to understand the conceptual connections inherent in the creative process of learning. When they develop their ePortfolio, students may build their understanding of the linkages between assessment and learning, with the focus changing from assessment *of* learning to assessment *for* learning. Constructivist practices such as self-reflection underpin ePortfolio practice, which can help increase student engagement with the learning process itself, and in turn develop lifelong learning abilities that augment the acquisition of specific disciplinary knowledge and skills.



Adapted from JISC. (2008). *Effective practice with e-Portfolios*, p. 7.

www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/publications/effectivepracticeeportfolios.pdf





What do you need to think about when supporting teachers or institutional managers to introduce ePortfolio-based learning?

The following questions have been compiled to help you to clarify the specific needs of the teaching staff or institutional managers with regard to utilising ePortfolios.

Scoping and purpose

- Who do we envision will use ePortfolios (undergraduates, postgraduates, alumni, staff)?
- What stage are they at in their education or employment?
- How might ePortfolios prepare them for their next stages of learning?
- What do we see as the main purposes of ePortfolios for our learners?
 - > to support formal academic learning
 - > to support overall development (including personal and career areas, and experience/learning from non-academic contexts)
 - > to develop the capacity for lifelong learning
 - > to support formative assessment,
 - > to provide an assessment management tool, for formal summative assessment
 - > to create a presentational portfolio to showcase achievements
 - > to support transition between different learning environments.

Teaching and Learning quality and outcomes

- What is the level of interest and engagement in ePortfolio learning in the institution/faculties/schools and amongst individual academic staff?
- What learning and teaching outcomes do we aim to achieve through the use of ePortfolios?
- How will ePortfolio activities be evaluated to ensure identified learning outcomes are being achieved?
- What pedagogical/androgogical approaches are appropriate to be incorporated into both the ePortfolio systems and associated training activities?
- What ongoing professional development will academic and support staff require?

Learner help and support

- What guidance to support learners is important in our context to include online or alongside the ePortfolio system?
 - > Guidance to learners on the purpose(s) of the system?
 - > Guidance to learners on how to use the system?
 - > A tutorial programme to support the ePortfolio process?
 - > Online tutor or mentor support for feedback to learners?
 - > Diagnostic tools to assist with self-assessment, or educational or career planning?
 - > Guidance and warnings about the risks associated with sharing personal information via the Web?
 - > ICT support for learners?

Teacher help and support

- Are we likely to encounter resistance to change among academics who wish to focus primarily on their teaching and research in a particular discipline?
- What professional development activities need to be developed for teachers to enable them to use the ePortfolio system?
- What form should ongoing technical support take?

Information management

- Will learners need to:
 - > enter, edit and save text?
 - > include a range of materials (eg CV, reflections, skills, achievements, goals and plans)?
 - > upload files as evidence of learning and/or competency (qualifications, certificates, other digital files such as images, audio, video)?
 - > hyperlink to files as evidence?
 - > export files?
 - > create their own web page templates?
 - > see all their data, with a list of uploaded and linked files?
 - > view or link to their academic transcript or official records?
- What types of information will be managed by a learner, and will not be processed for the purposes of the institution?
 - > Are there privacy implications associated with this?
- What information is owned and managed by the institution?
 - > Academic transcript – will a learner be able to view and link to transcript as authenticated evidence of achievement both during and after their period of study?
 - > How will security and authentication of transcript information be assured and maintained?
 - > How will the ePortfolio interoperate with our existing learning management and student management systems?

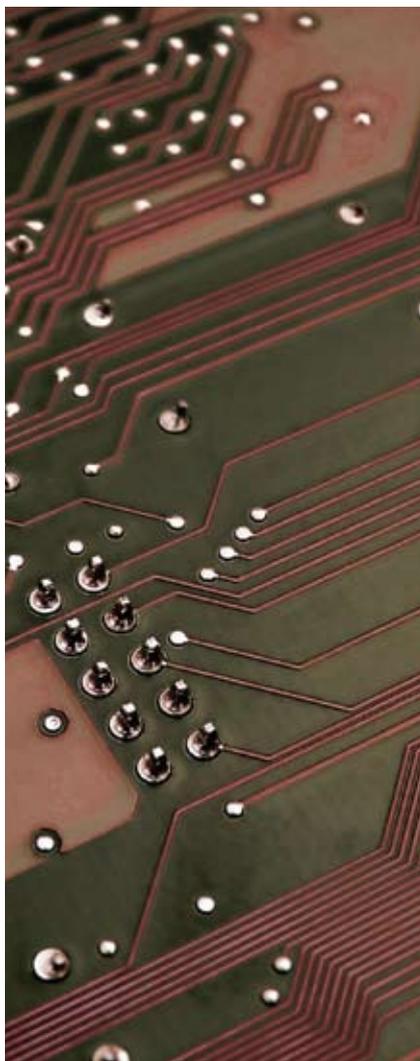


Information management cont.

- What information might be managed or processed collaboratively e.g. by more than one learner, or by more than one organisation?
 - > Collaborative work involving other people's personal data
 - > Work undertaken with another organisation, e.g. work experience placement
- What are the implications of shared information?
 - > Does the ePortfolio system have suitable prompts about the use of other people's data, or other people's copyrighted material, at the point of incorporation?
 - > Who has an interest, an obligation, a right with respect to this data? What is the interest, obligation, right?

Legal considerations and privacy issues

- Who owns the ePortfolio?
- How do we accommodate our privacy and intellectual property (IP) obligations under the relevant legislation, and under our institutional policies?
- Will a learner be able to view relevant institutional privacy and IP policies from within the ePortfolio system?
- Who will have permission to view all or part of a learner's ePortfolio?
- Who will set permissions for sharing learner information (learner/school/faculty/institution)?
- How long may/must data be stored after learner leaves the institution? What are the institutional obligations of stewardship?



Storage capacity and storage duration

- How much space will be allocated to each learner's records and digital files?
- How long will a learner's records be retained, so they may reflect back on progress between 'then' and 'now'?
- What process will accompany deletion of ePortfolios, e.g. learner initiated deletion or system initiated deletion of inactive ePortfolios?

Evaluation

- How might we evaluate our ePortfolio practice?
 - > Level of use by learners?
 - > Uptake across the institution?
 - > Impact on learners?
 - > Impact on staff?
 - > Acceptance/uptake by employer/professional bodies?

Accessibility/usability

- Does the system enable use by people with disabilities?
- Does the ePortfolio system comply with our obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and associated Disability Standards for Education 2005?
- Is accessibility via a keyboard (instead of a pointing device) available to a learner?
- Can each learner select preference settings for screen display – font style, size, colours of font and background, which are stored and automatically applied at log-in?

Technical standards and interoperability

- To what extent do we want our ePortfolio system to be compatible with those offered by associated sectors (other institutions, VET, schools)?
- What do we need to consider with regard to interoperability between systems?





Remember

You are not alone! Other stakeholders are part of the ePortfolio process, so consider the issues that are relevant to their own perspective and context.

Need more information?

Visit www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au to access the concept guides

- ePortfolio concepts for learners
- ePortfolio concepts for academic staff
- ePortfolio concepts for institutional managers
- ePortfolio concepts for employers, professional bodies and career services

Further reading

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). (2008).
Effective practice with ePortfolios: Supporting 21st century learning.
Available from www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). (2008).
InfoKit on ePortfolios.
Available from www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios

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Australian ePortfolio Project

www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au

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