ePortfolios: tools to support the implementation of graduate attribute policy

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Overview

• Background to the National GAP project

• The GA key issues framework – a systems perspective

• Examples of ePortfolio practice:
  – affordances to GA implementation
  – barriers to GA implementation

• Sharing experience

• Conclusions
Background

Summary

• ALTC funded project to scope the integration (how is this being done?) and achievement (how are they assessed/assured?) of GAs in Australian universities

Why needed?

Limited evidence of success despite 20 years of trying

Approach

• collaborative, iterative, reflexive inquiry
Ongoing cycles of inquiry & development

Phase 1:
Synthesis of research literature, collaborators’ experience and accounts of practice

Phase 2:
Co-creation with others’ practice to develop new insights and resources to enable a ‘joined-up’ understanding and approach to GA

Phase 3:
Grow an informed scholarly community to foster the next cycle of GA work (research and practice)

Adapted from an action research loop by Cynthia Mitchell – thanks Cynthia!
Some definitions

• **Graduate attributes** - the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and, consequently, shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as a citizen. (Bowden et al 2000)

• **Competences** represent a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities. (Tuning Project)
A ‘systems’ perspective

Affordances and Barriers

STUDENT CENTRED

STAFF DEVELOPMENT
CURRICULUM
ASSESSMENT
QUALITY ASSURANCE

IMPLEMENTATION

STAKEHOLDERS

CONCEPTUALISATION

Hughes & Barrie 31/01/098
6  S. Barrie
ePortfolio practice: affordances and barriers to GA implementation

• Three illustrative issues

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<tr>
<th>Key issue</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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| Conceptualisation       | • underpins different beliefs and values about GAs  
                          |   • explains and predicts:  
                          |   • articulation in policy  
                          |   • approaches to teaching, learning and assessment |
| Assessment              | defines the curriculum – for all stakeholders |
| Student-centredness     | defines what counts as the student experience of GAs - not what we do or say |
## Conceptualisation

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<th>Affordances</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
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<td>ePortfolios reflect a perspective of GAs as developed and demonstrated through disciplinary studies and opportunities for ‘integrative learning’ (Barrie 2007: Huber and Hutchings 2004)</td>
<td>GAs perceived as precursors to or distinct from disciplinary studies resulting in ePortfolios with a ‘binary character’ (if included at all)</td>
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| Consistency of GA terminology in ePortfolios and related criteria and standards – especially for identical or similar concepts → continuity and coherence | Different courses with:  
• different terminology for identical/similar concepts  
• same terminology for different concepts → disjuncture and confusion |
## Assessment

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<td>Authoritative, valid evidence of GA development provided through opportunities for engagement in ‘rich’ or ‘high impact’ (Kuh et al 2005) learning and assessment tasks (e.g. work experience, research, capstone tasks) - <em>whole greater than sum of parts</em></td>
<td>Reliance on traditional or disciplinary ‘signature’ assessment tasks that are often inadequate for providing valid evidence of GA development - <em>additive approach</em></td>
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<td>ePortfolio incorporates evidence from a wide range of learning experiences that support comprehensive GA development</td>
<td>ePortfolio incorporates evidence from traditional course assessments only and, where evidence validity is an issue, GAs are often omitted (e.g. those related to ethical or moral development)</td>
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<td>Whole of program assessment plan as basis of ePortfolio creation in support of GA development – enables and requires reflection over time, across courses and community life</td>
<td>Short-term assessment focus with different, unconnected ePortfolio requirements and practices from course to course</td>
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<td>Students have active role in the assessment process – rubrics support self-assessment in relation to GA development and provide basis for task negotiation and selection of evidence for ePortfolio inclusion</td>
<td>Students role is passive – links between individual assessment tasks and GAs made by assessors (sometimes using electronic resources) but often ineffective in developing student awareness or articulation of these attainments</td>
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# Student-centredness

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<td>Student autonomy in the selection of evidence for inclusion in ePortfolios in support of claims of GA development is actively encouraged and supported. ePortfolios practice requires and encourages self-assessment and goal-setting in relation to the collection of evidence of GA development as essential to the development of learning autonomy. Students use ePortfolios to seek and use feedback on GA development involving a range of peer, academic and external respondents.</td>
<td>Any use of ePortfolios as evidence of GA development is fully under institutional control and supervision. ePortfolio activity, including GA development, is largely academic-initiated, directed and assessed and constructs students as dependent learners. ePortfolios are primarily used for ‘private’ storage of evidence of GA development. (adapted from AeP Report pp. 154, 155)</td>
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Your experiences

• What examples of ePortfolios as affordances of GA implementation can you share from your own experience?

• Any examples of ePortfolios as barriers?
Conclusions

• ePortfolios are powerful tools with many applications in support of student learning

• When applied in support of graduate attribute development they can be based on unexplored assumptions and result in unintended outcomes

• As with any tools – the effectiveness of ePortfolios is determined by:
  – an understanding of the relationships among the elements of the system in which they are to be used, and
  – the soundness of the curriculum, pedagogical and assessment theories that underpin practice.
References


• The National GAP website http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/projects/nationalgap/introduction.htm