Integrating e-portfolio into undergraduate health courses:
An evolving story

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Brief background to our initiative

- Transition to practice – an important pedagogical issue for final year students
- ‘Transitions Out’ project (TOP)
- Development of capstone units including e-Portfolio as a key learning activity
Our working capstone context…

A capstone unit/experience is a culminating learning experience occurring in the final year of a course that brings reflection and focus to the whole course experience whilst, at the same time, leading students to look forward to their entry into a new world of work.

Our working capstone context …

**Reflection**
- On university and “real world” experiences

**Coherence**
- Across course: holistic understanding of studies

**Integration**
- Theory and practice; Teaching and learning

**Looking back and looking forward**
- Reviewing course; anticipating future work cultures, experiences and environments

**Attainment of goals**
- Clarification of course goals and objectives

**Heightened critical thinking**
- Synthesis, analysis, critical reflection

**Professional development skills**
- Through projects, student presentations, dialogues and interactions between students, staff and industry/community

**Comprehensive learning**
- Within the field/discipline and broadened educational experience

Dahlgren et al., 2006; Dunlap, 2005; Brooks, Benton-Kupper, & Slayton, 2004; Perrone & Vickers, 2003; Branch, 2000; Collier, 2000; Eckel, 1994
Phase 1: Semester 2, 2008

• **NSB333 Clinical Practice 5**
  – final semester clinical practice unit in Nursing (357 enrolled in 2/08)
  – includes 320 hours of workplace experience + a short on-campus program

• **HMB470 Practicum1**
  – 3rd year practicum unit in Human Movement Studies (65 enrolled in 2/08)
  – includes 80 hours of workplace experience + 20 hours clinic experience

• **PYB407 Research & Professional Development Seminar**
  – 4th year Psychology unit (Honours program) (68 enrolled in 2/08)
  – develops and extends students' understanding of research and practice issues
Student support

- e-Portfolio embedded as a core learning experience in each unit
- Explicit key messages in unit materials, eg. NSB333
  - This unit focuses on your clinical preparation for transition to beginning level practice as a registered nurse. You will be expected to draw upon knowledge and skills that have been developed throughout the course to provide competent patient care and develop an e-Portfolio that documents your achievements in relation to the ANMC Competency Standards for Registered Nurses (2006) and QUT Graduate Capabilities
- Class discussions & ‘hands-on’ portfolio development sessions
- Online resources to scaffold students’ learning, eg. student/graduate video vignette, sample portfolio entries
- Included as part of the assessment requirements for NSB333
Student support (Nursing)
The 5 Rs framework

• **Reporting:** what happened?
• **Responding:** how did I respond – think, feel, do?
• **Relating:** how does this *connect* with my prior experience, relevant theory etc?
• **Reasoning:** how do I *explain* what happened? what factors are relevant? What *assumptions* am I making? what *evidence* is there for my view?
• **Reconstructing:** what *conclusions* can I draw? and…..what have I *learned* and how will I *use this knowledge* to improve my practice?

Bain et al. (2002)
Portfolio exemplars…

Legal and Ethical Practice

While I was working on a busy surgical ward during my final prac one of the RNs handed the keys of the DD cupboard to me and asked me to look after them until she returned from tea break. I tried to explain that it is not legal for me (as an unauthorised person) to carry the keys, but she continued saying 'you're a few months off being an RN - get used to it”. She then walked away leaving me with the keys.

I felt very uneasy about this and inadequate in terms of the response that I had made. I immediately went and found another RN and handed over the keys to her.

Perhaps the RN was not familiar with the legal requirements for storage of drugs? Sometimes there is confusion about organizational guidelines and procedures with what is required according to relevant legislation. However, I felt that I should do something to prevent this kind of event happening to another student.
To this end I reviewed current information on the legal aspects of drug storage as per the Health (Drugs & Poisons) Regulations (1996). In collaboration with the CN of the ward, my facilitator encouraged me to present a short 10 minute in-service on the topic following handover a week later. I also prepared simple handouts for the staff which were well received.

What I learned from this experience is the importance of 'knowing the law' related to nursing and applying it to practice. I admit I hadn't previously put much effort into making the connections between law and practice but through this experience law became real to me. I also think it is important to have the courage to be assertive about resolving conflicts that arise in the practice context, and this is something that I'm going to work on further in the future.
Link to e-portfolio
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSB333 Clinical Practice 5: Standards and criteria for e-Portfolio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge &amp; understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ identified a comprehensive range of concepts/principles and/or theories that encompass studies undertaken during the course with only a few minor areas missing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ identified a range of concepts/principles and/or theories from studies undertaken during the course, but some significant areas of knowledge were missing or unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ identified essential concepts/principles from studies undertaken during the course, but many significant areas of knowledge were missing and unclear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking &amp; reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you consistently:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ identified key &amp; subsidiary relevant to each Experience &amp; how they related to each other and used these concepts to reconstruct/reframe your understanding of nursing practice and mostly included future application of these concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ identified key issues relevant to each Experience, and demonstrated reasonable ability to use these concepts to reconstruct/reframe your understanding of nursing practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ identified issues relevant to most of your Experiences and demonstrated some ability to use these concepts to reconstruct/reframe your understanding of nursing practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ did not demonstrate clear links to these concepts to reconstruct/reframe your understanding of nursing practice and/or the depth of your thinking was loosely confined to the first 3 levels of the 5Rs framework and/or Did not apply any issues/concepts to future application to nursing practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you consistently:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ used correct terminology and professional language, and there were very few minor mistakes in English expression, spelling, grammar &amp;/or syntax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ you mostly used correct terminology and professional language, and there were some mistakes in English expression, spelling, grammar &amp;/or syntax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In documenting your Portfolio Experiences you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ your use of correct terminology, syntax and professional language was adequate, but mistakes in English expression, spelling, grammar &amp;/or syntax indicate lack of proof reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension of meaning was inhibited by the errors in English expression, spelling, grammar &amp;/or syntax.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student feedback (Nursing)

Overall, developing the e-portfolio was worthwhile

- “it gets you thinking about your practice and what you should be doing and what you want to be doing”

but, there were issues regarding the ‘format’/ portfolio template

- “you felt you had to tailor the incident to the sub-headings and it felt a bit forced and defeated the point of getting you thinking openly. It put all these lines around what you were going to do.”

Timing is important

- “I think it’s a good idea to have everything all together and I enjoyed doing it, but it was hard at the end of my degree to think of everything I’d done in my whole degree. It would be better to do as you go along.”
- “CP5 is too late to be doing it. We are so overloaded. We spend 8 hours on prac, then we have jobs, families, and we still have other subjects to cover, so I think this comes as a terrible burden.”
- “in CP5, we should be just polishing it and getting it ready for interviews.”

A useful learning experience but duplication with other assessment?

- “we have to do reflections anyway for prac, so for me, e-portfolio was just a total waste of time because I had already thought about a lot of the issues that it presented, so it was just honestly cutting and pasting reflections into another form.”
- “I used parts of my CAT forms to put into the e-portfolio.”
- “I question the value of this e-portfolio. I would rather have had help putting together a resume and to have learned about interview techniques.”
Student feedback (HMS)

Developing the e-Portfolio was worthwhile

• “I think it helps you keep in touch with what you’re learning and what you’re experiencing and how that makes you feel. I don’t have a diary or anything like that but when I was going through that process I thought, this would be good to do all the time because reflection is a skill in itself.”

• “I will use it when I have to apply for a job. Even if you change the type of work, you can just go through and select all of the appropriate experiences and send that through to an employer, which is really good.”

but there were issues regarding the ‘format’/ portfolio template

• “the character space is too short”

• “we need to be able to submit longer reflections”

Timing is important

• “Expose students early on, so everyone is not worried that it’s a new thing they’ve never used before.”

• “The whole idea is to keep track of the experiences you’re having throughout uni. I was thinking it would have been good to have written that stuff earlier on. Then all your experience would be documented and saved and it would be really good.”

• “It would be good if at the end of each unit, you had to submit a couple of experiences from that unit.”

Needs to be assessable

• “When you’re at uni, you basically only look at stuff when you have to. If you don’t have to do it, you won’t.”

• Accessability is important

• “If you suddenly remembered something about prac while you were at uni, you could chuck in a few lines. You can do it at uni, at home or when you’re away. Or if you’re on prac, or talking to a potential employer, you can just show them on the internet. It’s already up there and I’ve already done it.”
Student feedback (Psychology)

Overall, developing the e-portfolio was worthwhile

- “It made me concentrate and think about things I wouldn’t have taken in before, so I found that was useful.”
- “I really liked the reflective exercises. I prefer to reflect on things than even writing an assignment because I think you actually process the information better when you’re reflecting because you’re looking at how it affects you as an individual rather than theoretically.”
- “You learn something and think ‘I’ve got a handle on this’, then you go back and do self-reflection and think ‘I don’t know anything’. Sometimes it makes me feel less confident.”

Timing is important

- “At the end of fourth year, it feels like too little too late. It should be all throughout the degree program. At the end of fourth year, there are so many other pressures.”
- “Even if it was just two reflections a semester, because you get to the end and you’re doing something that makes you realize what you don’t know”.
- “It should be integrated throughout the whole course. There’ve been a lot of challenges along the way that we haven’t explored in a formal sense.”

Assessable?

- “To write a reflection on my self-development – I don’t mind doing it, but I don’t like being graded on it.”
- “It’s a difficult thing to compare people on because different people have different insight into their own abilities.”
Some reflections…..

Pedagogy

• potential for structured reflection to facilitate a holistic understanding of studies, self awareness and awareness of self as ‘prospective’ professional
• e-portfolio can be a useful learning activity but achievement of capstone outcomes may require ‘more’ than this ‘alone’ and/or further thinking with regard to final year portfolio outcomes

Process

• importance of a ‘situated’ approach to portfolio development
  – unit/unit perspective
  – across the course perspective
• further development of assessment strategies that align with the intended outcomes
Where to from here?
The next chapter……

• Re-thinking the ‘location’ of portfolio development within courses

• Re-clarifying the purpose of portfolio as a core learning activity within units/courses and issues regarding assessment, eg.  
  – required assessment activity?  
  – nature of the assessment criteria?  
  – impact of student life cycle?

• Scaffolding portfolio development – what will work best with different student cohorts? What resources are needed by staff?
Questions? Comments?

Thank you
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