

ePortfolio concepts

for academic staff



'I'm really excited by the notion of ePortfolios. I really like the idea of making it available to students and staff, whether for the recognition of prior learning process or for the purpose of linking it to their employability skills.'

– AeP focus group participant (2007)

AeP.

AUSTRALIAN
LEARNING
& TEACHING
COUNCIL

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 concept guides aimed at these diverse stakeholder groups.

With the growing use of eLearning in universities and colleges, many teachers want to increase their understanding of ePortfolio-based learning. Have you considered how you can develop student-centred learning activities to enhance the quality and sustainability of learning outcomes?

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 use an ePortfolio?

There are many different potential purposes for ePortfolios, so you need to be clear about the reasons why you want to introduce ePortfolio-based learning activities into the curriculum.

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.

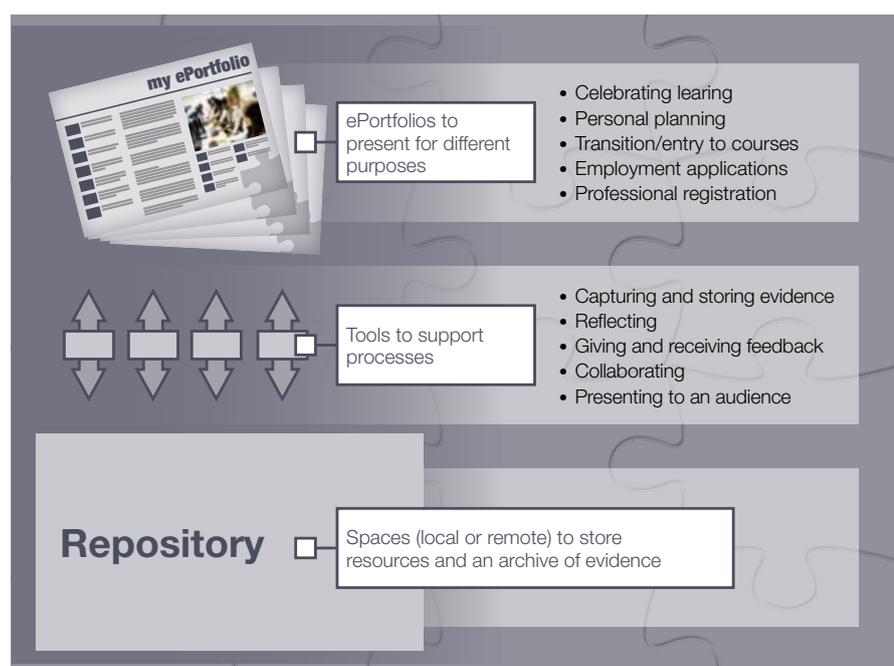
- Identify skills gaps through review of and reflection on their ePortfolio content.
- Plan and set personal development targets.

ePortfolios can assist you, as a teacher, to gain deeper, more rounded insights into your 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 is 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 introducing ePortfolio-based learning into your teaching?

The following questions have been compiled to help you to clarify your specific needs with regard to using ePortfolios.

Teaching philosophy

- Do I believe in student-centred learning?
- Am I concerned about quality learning outcomes that focus on the development of the student as a whole person?
- Do I think about the contribution I am making to students building the skills they need to gain employment in a dynamic, changing world?

Pedagogies

- Does ePortfolio use, with its emphasis on reflective practice and constructivist learning, suit my usual teaching approaches?
- Would professional development in alternative pedagogical approaches help me to implement ePortfolio in my teaching?
- Will the introduction of ePortfolio learning require program redesign?

Curriculum

- What learning outcomes do I wish my students to have?
- What are the learning goals for my subject?
- Can ePortfolios really assist in the achievement of these learning goals (ePortfolios may not necessarily be appropriate in every academic context)?
- How are ePortfolios currently being used in my faculty/school/academic program?
- Will my application of ePortfolios complement approaches in other parts of the faculty/school/academic program?
- When is the best time to introduce ePortfolios?
 - > Integrated?
 - > Optional?
 - > Embedded?
- Should ePortfolio use be assessed?
 - > If so, should the assessment be formative or summative, or both?
 - > Do ePortfolios fit in with our existing assessment approaches?
 - > What will I assess—the product or the process?
 - > Should I allocate grades, pass/fail, or use another approach?
 - > What weighting should it have in terms of the overall assessment?

Tools for learning

- How can ePortfolios be incorporated as a useful learning activity in my subject?
- How can ePortfolios assist with assessment in my subject?
- How can I motivate my students to fully engage with the ePortfolio process?
 - > External motivation, e.g. the ePortfolio is a mandatory part of assessment?
 - > Internal motivation, e.g. students see the relevance of the ePortfolio to their personal development.
 - > Modelling, e.g. students see that I also have my own ePortfolio.
 - > What additional training or resources will my students require to successfully engage with the ePortfolio?
 - Reflective practice training?
 - Technical (ICT) training?
 - In-class access to computers?
 - Increased student Internet access limits?

Resourcing and support

- Do I have the time and energy required to adequately support ePortfolio implementation in my subject?
- What support is available to help me implement ePortfolios in my teaching?
 - > Learning design assistance from teaching and learning support services?
 - > Technical (ICT) support?
 - > Management and administrative support?
 - > Pedagogical support, e.g. academic peers, Teaching and Learning support services, a community of practice?
 - > Can my Careers and Employment office assist with marketing the potential of ePortfolios to students?
- What professional groups/networks/collaborations are available to support my use of ePortfolios, e.g. drawing on institutional, national or international relationships?
- Do I think I would benefit from professional development/training to enable me to effectively implement ePortfolios in my teaching?

Commitment

- How might my research and/or practice in ePortfolio use contribute to my own professional development?
- Can I identify an 'ePortfolio champion' who will support innovative practice?





Remember

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

Need more information?

Visit www.eportfoliopRACTICE.qut.edu.au

- ePortfolio concepts for learners
- ePortfolio concepts for institutional managers
- ePortfolio concepts for information technology and teaching and learning support services
- 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

Acknowledgment

Thanks are extended to the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) in the United Kingdom for their guidance in the development of this resource.

Australian ePortfolio Project

www.eportfoliopRACTICE.qut.edu.au

February 2009



AeP.

