

# ePortfolio concepts

for employers, professional bodies  
and careers services



*'Building and maintaining an ePortfolio will help students to be better prepared for the recruitment process, meaning that the quality of employment applications will improve. Students will be able to answer interview questions and selection criteria more effectively by drawing on a wide variety of real life examples. This will make it easier for employers to accurately assess the qualities and suitability of each applicant.'*

AeP.

AUSTRALIAN  
LEARNING  
& TEACHING  
COUNCIL

QUT

– Employer, Brisbane



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 an **employer**, a **careers service** staff member or a **professional association** officer, you might be considering how you can utilise ePortfolio systems and processes to enhance your employment processes or the employability and career planning of learners at your institution, or support professional accreditation activities.

### What is an ePortfolio?

This guide uses the term 'ePortfolio' to refer to an electronically stored collection (or archive) of a student's or graduate's experiences, achievements and artefacts, together with their reflections on learning. The process of creating an ePortfolio can assist learners, graduates and employees to:

- 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

### Employability skills and ePortfolios

Our ability to build a competitive Australian workforce depends on our workers being able to apply a 'range of employability skills learned in many contexts and through a range of experiences' (Precision Consultancy, 2007, p.1). The focus on graduate attributes and employability skills is central to the development of ePortfolios; the creation of an ePortfolio encourages graduates and employees to consider their studies and experiences in a broad career development context. A clear understanding of transferable competencies, such as communication, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self-management, and teamwork, will assist workers not only in their transition from higher education to the workplace, but also with their ongoing professional development and lifelong learning.

Employability skills are progressively developed both vertically and horizontally, in all formal and informal learning contexts, including paid employment, self employment, formal education and volunteering in the community.

Beyond our own shores, government policies focussed on lifelong learning and employability are driving ePortfolio development in regions such as Europe (particularly the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Scandinavia), Canada and New Zealand. To make the most of these developments, employers, careers services and professional associations need to understand the value of employability skills as the lens through which employees are increasingly viewing their own development and career paths. Incorporating ePortfolios into your business and recruitment practices can provide a common language to communicate with both new graduates and established workers.

### How might ePortfolios assist your business processes?

ePortfolios can assist with a range of activities, including:

#### • Recruitment and appraisal processes

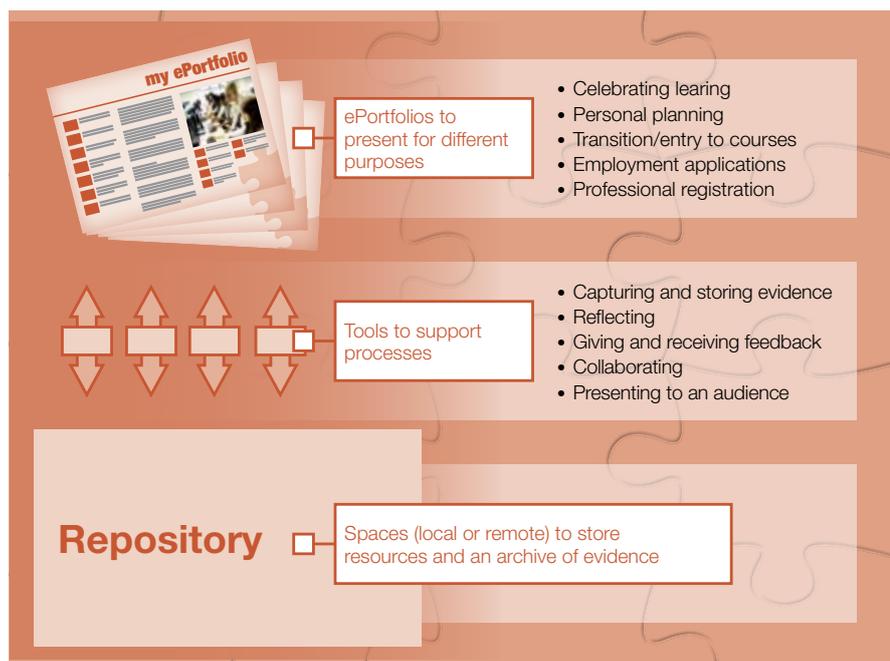
By assisting job applicants to contextualise and understand their development in terms of employability skills and graduate attributes, ePortfolio use can enhance the quality of job and promotion applications, streamlining recruitment and candidate appraisal processes.

#### • Training Needs and Career Planning

An ePortfolio can assist in the identification of skills gaps and training needs, enabling the provision of targeted employee development plans and thus a more efficient use of training budgets. They may also enable employees to reflect on themselves and encourage longer term career plans to be implemented. ePortfolios can therefore serve as a tool to support staff performance and workforce planning in your organisation.

#### • Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

ePortfolios can be used to showcase evidence of CPD activities for professional accreditation purposes, as well as to identify both short and long-term career development needs.



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

[www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/publications/effectivepracticeeportfolios.pdf](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/publications/effectivepracticeeportfolios.pdf)





- **Recognition of prior learning (RPL)**

The process of collecting evidence of employee achievements for formal RPL documentation can be streamlined through the use of ePortfolios. Skills, abilities and achievements for a particular employee can be compiled in a central repository, aligned with the specific skill sets recognised by higher and vocational education institutions, making the RPL process simpler and more efficient.

- **Internationalisation of the workforce**

With the increasing internationalisation of the workforce, cross-candidate comparisons can be complex, due to differing qualifications and professional requirements across countries. ePortfolios provide a richer view of a candidate's abilities, fleshing out the academic qualifications to reveal more clearly the range of specific experiences and skills an individual has attained, thereby providing useful additional evidence on which to base recruitment decisions.

### What would be involved in incorporating ePortfolios into my business?

Higher and vocational education institutions around the world are introducing ePortfolio systems and encouraging their students to develop ePortfolios. Student ePortfolios can be made available to organisations during graduate recruitment activities, providing a tailored view of candidate skills and experiences, aligned with the selection criteria for the position. An in-house ePortfolio system can be established to support the staff performance review and career development process, or there may be opportunities to work with professional associations to develop a targeted CPD program.

### Career services

Career services in many Australian education institutions offer a wide range of information and resources to support students and new graduates to gain employment, and develop their career management skills. ePortfolios provide a vital tool for working with academic staff to prepare students for fieldwork placement, work integrated learning activities, or employment in their chosen career. The mission and role of most career services are in principle aligned with the goals of ePortfolio practice, which 'offers students a tool they can use to gather evidence of their skills, reflect on their experiences, and recognise their improvement and development over time... tak[ing] a more holistic view of their learning by reflecting on experiences... from all areas of their lives' (QUT, 2009). Consequently, many academic careers services are seen to be lead players in the introduction of ePortfolios in their institution.

### Professional associations

A growing number of professional associations are utilising the ePortfolio process to provide evidence of the attainment of professional standards, as in the medical sciences, nursing and teaching. An ePortfolio allows a candidate to collate and reflect on their learning activities and work experience to substantiate their application for professional accreditation, or for current members to demonstrate active and ongoing professional development to facilitate their reaccreditation as a professional. Teacher registration processes, for example, encompass the requirement to present evidence of continuing professional development as a critical element of the renewal of registration, with a number of State departments of education mandating an ePortfolio as the format to substantiate the development of critical reflective practice on professional issues.

### Case study: ePortfolios for career services

The Careers and Employment Service at QUT has been instrumental in working with the Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support to develop an institution-wide student ePortfolio platform. The relevance of the ePortfolio has recently been enhanced through a Career Development Program designed to help students focus on different aspects of career development during their studies at university. The program includes a series of modules such as Workplace Placement Preparation, Career Preparation, Career Management and Workplace Resilience. In each module, students are encouraged to engage with the Student ePortfolio, with their activities being scaffolded from an introduction to the ePortfolio early on, through to maximising its use in the later stages of the program. Built within the learning management system, the program provides seamless access for academics wishing to embed the modules into the curriculum in order to increase familiarity with realistic career destinations, to improve student certainty about their course choice, and to demonstrate how the curriculum develops capabilities and skills that will enhance employability. Students are encouraged to utilise the ePortfolio to assist in the development and recording of graduate capabilities and employability skill acquisition, and to make the curriculum itself more meaningful through its clear career relevance.

### Case study: ePortfolios for professional associations

In line with the continuing complexity of the role of health professionals, there is an evolving interest in the potential of ePortfolios to facilitate personal reflections and to document professional development. Many highly experienced nursing personnel are choosing to undertake additional postgraduate studies to become nurse practitioners. An extensive set of formal curriculum competencies needs to be mastered by students in order to achieve professional accreditation. In Queensland, the registration of nurse practitioners is managed by the Queensland Nursing Council (QNC). The QNC has adopted a portfolio approach to registration, with candidates asked to provide evidence of their clinical leadership and their reflective self-assessment of the attainment of the nurse practitioner competency standards.

### Case study: ePortfolios for employers

In 2007 Queensland University of Technology (QUT) introduced a Professional Staff ePortfolio, which was collaboratively developed by Human Resources, Careers and Employment and the Division of Technology, Information and Learning Support (TILS). Pilot groups were established in both the Division of TILS and the Division of Administrative Services. The ePortfolio concept features a set of skill areas relevant to professional staff in an academic institution and specifically supports the People Capability Framework which seeks to improve the retention of staff by clearly articulating career pathways and facilitating staff progression and promotion. The Professional Staff ePortfolio has been acknowledged to be a key tool for staff to record evidence on personal and professional development and to share this with their supervisor as part of the performance planning and review process. In 2009, the focus will move to an Academic ePortfolio, which will be developed to ensure alignment with the promotion process and with current initiatives within the university to promote teaching quality and excellence.





# 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.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au](http://www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au)

- ePortfolio concepts for learners
- ePortfolio concepts for academic staff
- ePortfolio concepts for institutional managers
- ePortfolio concepts for information technology and teaching and learning support 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](http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios)

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). (2008).

*InfoKit on ePortfolios.*

Available from [www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios](http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios)

## References

Precision Consultancy (2007).

*Graduate employability skills: Prepared for the Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council.* Retrieved on January 7, 2009 from [www.dest.gov.au/highered/bihecc](http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/bihecc)

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) (2009).

*Student ePortfolio.*

[www.studenteportfolio.qut.edu.au/](http://www.studenteportfolio.qut.edu.au/)

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## Australian ePortfolio Project

[www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au](http://www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au)

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