

ePortfolios as an effective approach for First Year engagement

Gillian Hallam
Wendy Harper

QUT / Australian ePortfolio Project

First Year Curriculum Principle: Engagement




Learning, teaching, and assessment approaches in the first year curriculum:

- Should enact an **engaging and involving curriculum and pedagogy**
- Should enable **active and collaborative learning**

Learning communities should be promoted through the embedding in first year curriculum of:

- **Active and interactive learning opportunities**
- Other opportunities for
 - **Peer-to-peer collaboration**
 - **Teacher-student interaction**


Context for ePortfolio-based learning

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- Learning takes place in many different situations:
 - Formal and informal
 - Vertical and horizontal
 - Learning can be viewed as ‘lifelong’ and ‘lifewide’
 - The structural and developmental aspects of formal education programs can stimulate learners:
 - To become active participants in their learning
 - To gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge and skills they acquire
 - To monitor the progress they make towards their goals
 - ePortfolios have the potential to support teachers and learners in this context


The ePortfolio as 'product'

- Provides a personal space where students can collect – digitally – artefacts and reflections that present evidence of:
 - Their learning progress
 - Their experiences
 - Their achievements
- To articulate actual learning outcomes

The ePortfolio as 'process'

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- Allows students to move beyond the notion of **what** they have learned to consider **how** they have learned
 - When effectively integrated into the learning and assessment activities in a first year academic program, student can be helped:
 - To better understand the connections inherent in the creative process of learning
 - To reflect on their skill development
 - To share, collaborate and present the evidence to others
 - To make sense of their own complex stories
 - To think about their career goals
 - Alignment with the FYECD Engagement Principle

One international context

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- Quality enhancement (Scotland)
 - Personal Development Planning in FYE
 - Students gain self-awareness as developing learners and plan the actions that will enhance personal and career development
 - PDP and ePortfolios should be introduced into FY – both as concepts (processes) and as tools

For students

- To see full picture of themselves as learners
 - Personal (identity)
 - Social (friendships and networks)
 - Academic (formal study)
 - To relate to prior learning & education
- To make linkages between study elements to facilitate engagement across the whole program
- To link employability to the curriculum, while also identifying and planning for career goals in a structured way
- With support:
 - Peer and career mentoring
 - Work integrated learning
 - Buy-in from academic staff

For staff

- To establish valuable learning practices, eg *reflection* in the FY
- To think in an integrated way about student transition, engagement, retention, empowerment
- To engage all stakeholders:
 - Educators
 - Academic managers
 - Educational technologists
 - Employers
 - Learners

The 'individual' context

[Video]

AeP research activities

- **Data collection**
 - Literature review and environmental scan
 - National audit
 - Focus groups
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Student surveys: expectations and experiences
 - Mature users
 - Case studies
- **Different perspectives**
 - Educators
 - Academic managers
 - Educational technologists
 - Human resources staff
 - Learners
- **International Symposium**
7–8 February 2008 at QUT, Brisbane
- **Final Report:** 22 October 2008



Released
22 Oct 2008

AeP.
Australian ePortfolio Project

Australian ePortfolio Project

ePortfolio use by university students in Australia:
Informing excellence in policy and practice

Final project report **August 2008**

www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au/information/report/

Key research findings

- High level of interest in the use of ePortfolios in the context of higher education
- Potential to help students become reflective learners
 - Conscious of their personal & professional strengths and weaknesses
 - Able to make their existing and developing skills more explicit
- Some good examples of early adoption in different institutions, distributed across the sector
- Greatest use in coursework programs, rather than research programs
- Implementation generally at subject or program level, with little faculty- or university-wide activity
- Responsibility for implementation frequently rested with the individual teaching unit
- An alternative centralised model of coordination by ICT services, careers and employment, or teaching and learning support beginning to emerge

The current picture

- ePortfolio practice in Australian universities is fragmented
- Lack of a common language has led to some confusion amongst practitioners
- Variety of software tools available
- Scant research activity around the role of ePortfolios in education and employability skills
- Not yet equal to leading edge practice in other countries, but clear evidence of strong interest across the sector
- The AeP project itself has stimulated interest and engagement



The ePortfolio environment

- Four individual, yet interrelated, contexts where strategies may be employed to support and foster ePortfolio practice:
 - Government policy
 - Technical standards
 - Academic policy
 - Learning and teaching
- Need for cohesion to bring together the puzzle pieces to benefit:
 - Individual students
 - Quality of learning
 - Value of higher education outcomes



Stakeholders	Level	Context	Policy and practice factors					National relationships	International relationships
HE sector	Strategic	HE policy	Government policy	HE policy	Standards	Resourcing	Infrastructure	HE sector Schools VET RPL	International research collaboration International Centre for ePortfolio Research SURF NL
Institution			Academic policy	Strategic direction	Institutional policy	T&L quality and outcomes	Institutional culture	Innovation	Institutional relationships VET Employers
Faculties/ Support divisions	Tactical	L&T context		T&L policy (faculty, course) Staff development	T&L support services	T&L culture	ICT support services	Careers & employment services	Discipline relationships Professional bodies Employers
			Teaching philosophy	Curriculum	Pedagogies	Tools for learning	Innovation	Academic colleagues	International professional collaboration
Academics	Operational	Work	Employability skills	Professional standards	Competencies	Recruitment process	Lifelong learning	Employers Professional bodies	
Employers Mentors Peers Family	1:1 relationships	Community	Social networking	Extracurricular activities	Volunteer/ community work	Culture		Social networking	International technical collaboration
Learners		Individual	Personality	Attitudes	Experiences	Reflection	Learning styles	School VET RPL	eLearning framework IMS HR-XML

The Hallam, Harper and Hauville model of ePortfolio factors, stakeholders and relationships

Key recommendations

- **Academic policy** in higher education institutions: to recognise the value of ePortfolio practice as a component of different pedagogies that enhance the quality of learning and teaching across the institution.
- **ePortfolio stakeholders** establish a communities of practice to share learning and experiences of quality ePortfolio practice in higher education, in order to foster scholarship and research and to provide a forum for dissemination about good practice.
- **A regular Australasian conference** be convened to explore and discuss ePortfolio research and practice
- **Further research** into the impact of ePortfolios on learning processes and outcomes within and beyond the university



Key learnings from HE experience

- Complexity of the picture
 - One size doesn't fit all
 - Many approaches needed - and that's fine
 - Need for connectedness (lifelong learning)
- Champions in pockets
- Emergent practice and maturing approach
- Learners move beyond *what* they have learned to *how* they have learned
- Learners see the connection to employability outcomes
- Importance of the First Year Experience to set it all in place, for 'all the right reasons'



In conclusion ...

- At the broadest level, ePortfolio can play a significant role in contributing to:
 - [micro] The enhanced FY Student experience
 - [macro] Australia's vision to become a highly skilled, productive and competitive nation
- The learner's needs are central to the process
- AeP2 offers us the chance to engage more stakeholders
- AeP2 Symposium – next week!



For further information

AeP website

www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au

AeP Final Report

www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au/information/report/

Gillian Hallam

g.hallam@qut.edu.au

Wendy Harper

w.harper@qut.edu.au

