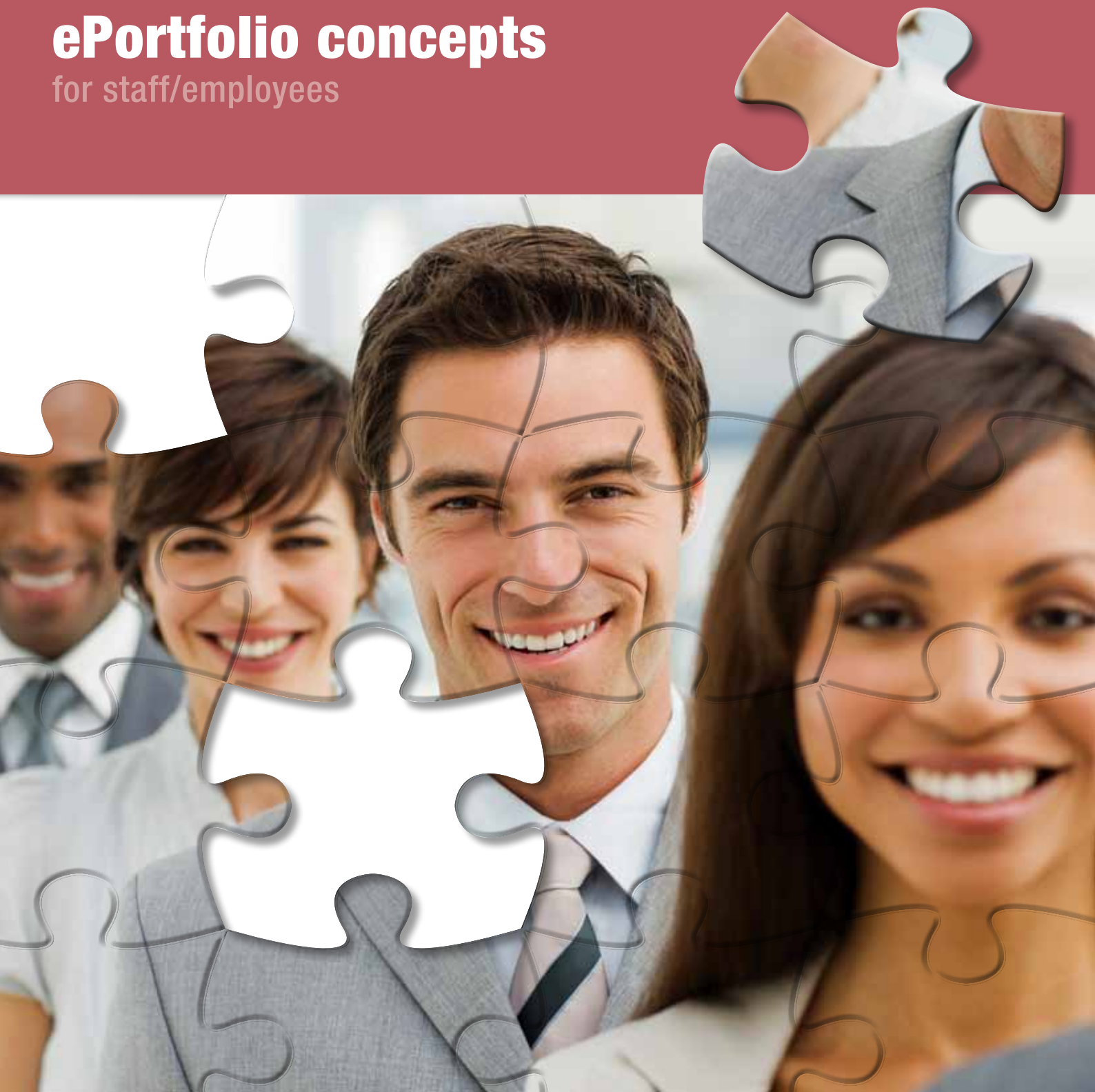


ePortfolio concepts

for staff/employees



'After writing just one experience according to the 'formula' suggested by the ePortfolio team, I could notice a change in my thinking. I was learning to consider my experiences from an employer's perspective and to identify – in all facets of my life – examples of skills that employers would value.'

– ePortfolio user, QUT

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ePortfolios are becoming popular with employees around the world as a tool to enhance learning and assist with personal career development. As a staff member, you might be wondering how you can use an ePortfolio to support your learning and development. This guide will introduce you to ePortfolios, their benefits, and issues you need to consider when developing your own ePortfolio.

What is an ePortfolio?

This guide uses the term ‘ePortfolio’ to refer to an electronically stored collection (or archive) of an individual’s experiences, achievements and artefacts, together with their reflections on learning and professional development.

Why use an ePortfolio?

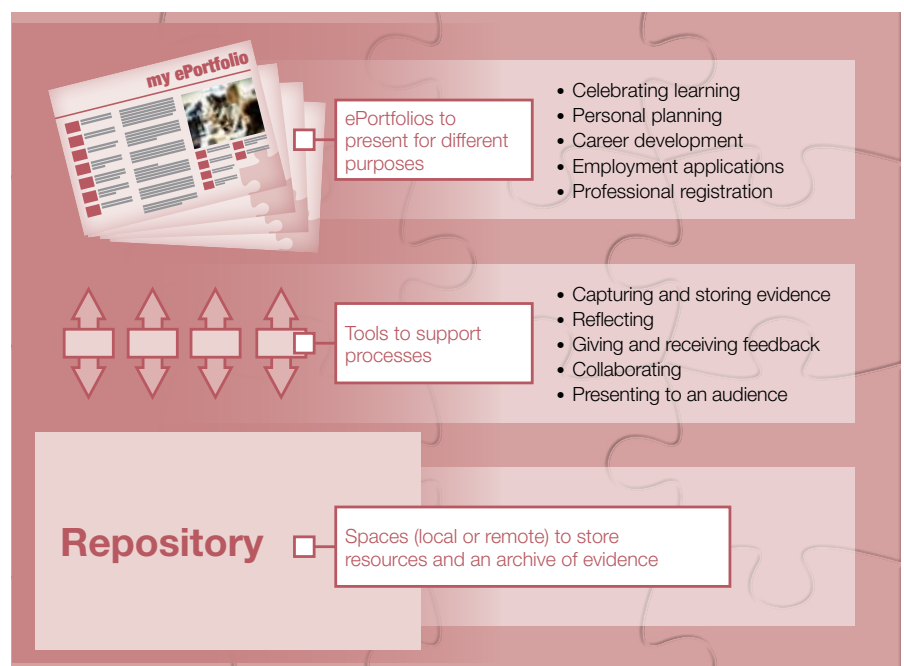
ePortfolios can be customised and personalised into a one-stop-shop to demonstrate your skills and experiences to supervisors and managers, colleagues, and potential employers. Many employees find their ePortfolio to be a valuable resource when it comes to participating in performance management and development processes, writing job applications and preparing for interviews. People who have used ePortfolios report having a greater awareness of their skills, greater confidence in their abilities, and feeling more independent as a learner.

In the professional context, an ePortfolio can assist you with your personal development by providing a single, organised repository from which you may:

- Develop an holistic overview of your learning/experiences/development

- Understand your achievements and experiences in terms of professional attributes and employability skills
- Extract evidence to represent your learning and achievements, for example to develop selection criteria responses
- Identify skills gaps through review of and reflection on your ePortfolio content
- Plan, set and review personal development targets.

An ePortfolio is not only a product, but more importantly a process, which can help you to better understand not just *what* you have learned, but *how* you have learned. As you reflect on your experiences to create your ePortfolio, you will also develop important lifelong learning abilities that complement your technical knowledge and skills.



Adapted from JISC. (2008). Effective practice with e-Portfolios, p. 7.
www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/publications/effectivepracticeeportfolios.pdf

‘It was only when I could write about my experiences that the really great value of the ePortfolio became apparent. My confidence in myself as a valuable employee increased dramatically!... And when it came to applying for jobs, I could readily draw together evidence from a wide variety of areas to demonstrate my competence... I believe that this confidence and maturity was evident in both my written applications and interviews.’

– ePortfolio user, QUT





What do I need to think about when creating and maintaining an ePortfolio?

What is my main reason for creating an ePortfolio?

Your reason(s) for creating the ePortfolio will guide you as to what evidence to incorporate. Your motivations might include:

- to help you address job or promotion applications
- to showcase your skills and experiences to your supervisor, potential employers or professional organisations
- to demonstrate the attainment of professional standards
 - > Refer to the employability skills required by your industry (available from job advertisements, industry associations or career advisory services), and think about which of your experiences and achievements align with them.
- to help plan your personal development and build your lifelong learning skills
 - > Refer to the skills and capabilities identified as important by your organisation, and think about which of your experiences and achievements align with them. Consider what training or experiences you require to be able to develop those skills you don't yet have.
 - > Use your ePortfolio to look for patterns in your learning. Are there certain types of experiences or activities from which you seem to learn more? Aim to structure future learning opportunities around those types of experiences.
- to support your application for the recognition of prior learning (RPL)
 - > After you have entered a range of experiences, sit back and reflect on which employability skill each entry represents. You will probably find that each entry can be used to demonstrate more than one skill or attribute.

How do I go about creating an entry in my ePortfolio?

To get the most out of your ePortfolio, you need to do more than simply add examples of your work. Each time you add a piece of evidence, you need to provide a brief context for the piece – why are you adding it? What does it display? What do you want your audience to know about that piece of work?

One useful method to help you provide a succinct context is called the STAR-L framework. This stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result and lessons Learnt, and can help you to structure your reflections about an experience such that the meaning and outcome of the experience can be clearly identified and communicated to others.

- Situation – the context in which the experience occurred.
- Task – what was actually required of you in the situation.
- Action – the steps that you personally took in response to the task. When reflecting on your actions, ask yourself why you chose to respond in that particular way.
- Result – the outcome of your actions. How did your actions contribute to the completion of the task? How did your actions affect the final outcome of the situation?
- Learnt – the things you have learned from the experience. Highlight any skills or abilities that you have developed or improved as a result of the experience. Think about how you might apply what you've learned to other situations.

How will I ensure my ePortfolio is kept up to date?

To ensure your ePortfolio gives you the greatest benefit, keep your information up-to-date. Think about how you are going to achieve this.

- Set aside half an hour every Friday to add the week's achievements to your ePortfolio.
- After a major event (e.g. conference, presentation, project), take time to reflect on your experience and add an entry about it to your ePortfolio.
- At the end of each month, spend an hour browsing through your ePortfolio. Consider whether there are any new experiences or artefacts you could add to it as evidence of your learning or skills.

Who will have access to my ePortfolio?

It is important whenever you add information to the Web to remember that it is a public space. While all ePortfolio systems provide privacy controls, it is essential that you understand exactly who can access your ePortfolio.

In most cases, your institution's ePortfolio tool will enable you to customise your ePortfolio for different audiences, for example by selecting some experiences/artefacts for your supervisor or colleagues to be able to see, whilst keeping other experiences for your eyes only. Check your institution's ePortfolio guides to make sure you understand how this works.

What sort of experiences and artefacts should I include in my ePortfolio?

Think broadly when selecting experiences to include in your ePortfolio. You can include evidence of skills you have gained at work, at school or university, in volunteer roles, or in your personal life. Some examples might include:

- roles or achievements in employment or voluntary work
- assessment pieces you performed well in during your university degree
- awards you have won at work, university or in your personal life/the community
- whatever you include should provide clear evidence of a particular skill or attribute that you possess.

What will happen to my ePortfolio in the long term?

Some organisations may continue to provide former employees with access to ePortfolios after they leave the organisation. Check your organisation's ePortfolio policy to find out whether this is possible.

Alternatively, you may be able to download a copy or file of your ePortfolio experiences to take with you if you leave your organisation. Finally it is important to know whether there is a point at which your ePortfolio will be deleted by the organisation storing it, for example, if it is inactive for a period of time.





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

- ePortfolio concepts for academic staff
- 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
- ePortfolio concepts for learners

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

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Australian ePortfolio Project

www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au

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