ePortfolio concepts
for institutional managers

'The need for an integrated student experience has been recognised for some time, along with the need to address the concerns of employers and professional associations regarding the adequate preparation of graduates for the workplace. ePortfolio provides a tool which supports the integration of the student experience across courses of study and the transition to employment.'

– Professor Tom Cochrane, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Technology, Information and Learning Support, 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 guides aimed at these diverse stakeholder groups.

As an institutional manager, you might be considering how you can utilise ePortfolio systems and processes to enhance the quality and sustainability of learning outcomes for learners and/or teachers in your institution.

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 systems and processes at your institution. ePortfolios can support a range of activities, including study or employment applications, transition between different life stages, assessment of professional standards or providing evidence of continuing professional development.

In the academic context, an ePortfolio may assist both learners and teachers 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 their own personal development targets.
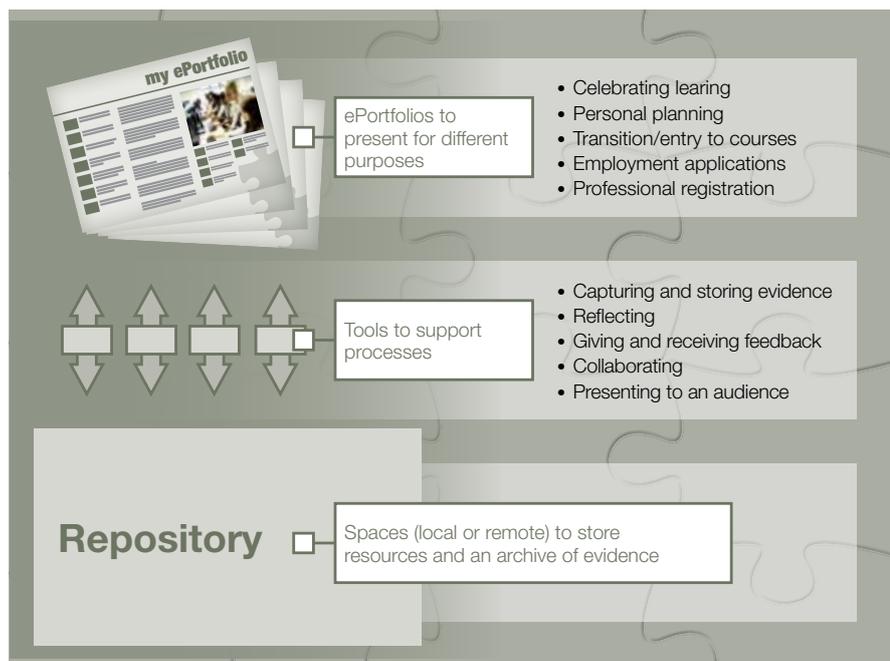
ePortfolios can also assist teachers to gain deeper, more rounded insights into their students, enabling the provision of rich individualised academic advice.

my ePortfolio

ePortfolios to present for different purposes
- Celebrating leaving
- Personal planning
- Transition/entry to courses
- Employment applications
- Professional registration

Tools to support processes
- Capturing and storing evidence
- Reflecting
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Collaborating
- Presenting to an audience

Repository
Spaces (local or remote) to store resources and an archive of evidence

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

What do we need to think about when introducing an ePortfolio system at our institution?

The following questions have been compiled to help you to clarify your institution's specific needs with regard to implementing an ePortfolio system.

Scoping and purpose
- Who do we envision will use ePortfolios (undergraduates, postgraduates, alumni, staff)?
- What stage are they at in their education or employment?
- How might ePortfolios prepare them for their next stages of learning?
- What do we see as the main purposes of ePortfolios for our learners?
  - > to support formal academic learning
  - > to support overall development (including personal and career areas, and experience/learning from non-academic contexts)
  - > to develop the capacity for lifelong learning
  - > to support formative assessment
  - > to provide an assessment management tool, for formal summative assessment
  - > to create a presentational portfolio to showcase achievements
  - > to support transition between different learning environments

Institutional policy
- Does ownership of the ePortfolio lie with the learner or the institution? How can we reflect this in our institutional policies and culture?
- Will ePortfolios be portable, enabling learners to take their ePortfolio with them when they move between insitutions?
- What national or international standards should we adopt to enable long term portability and interoperability of ePortfolios?
- How will we ensure individual ePortfolios can be maintained in the long term, eg. throughout multiple software and storage upgrades?
- What are the implications of ePortfolio for our existing institutional privacy policy?
- What are the implications of ePortfolio for our existing institutional data security policy?
- How will different security and access permissions be accommodated at a policy level? eg. learner access, employer access, past student access.
- What is the institution's legal liability with regards to materials stored within the learners' ePortfolio?
- How can our policies allow maximum flexibility for the learner, while accommodating privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property concerns?
- Will inactive ePortfolios eventually be disposed of? At what point will this occur?

Institutional culture
- Do the mission and values of our institution encourage innovation?
- Do the mission and values foster a culture of student-centred learning?

Strategic direction
- To what extent do we want our ePortfolio system to be compatible with those offered by associated sectors (other institutions, VET, schools)?
- How will we maintain relationships with other associated sectors using ePortfolio, to ensure collaboration and cooperation?
- With which national and international bodies do we need to develop relationships regarding ePortfolio research and practice?
- Is our institution's long-term strategic planning flexible enough to enable uptake of new technologies which frequently emerge in much shorter timeframes?
- Do we need to encourage a whole-of-institution approach to ePortfolio practice to ensure consistency?
- How can we ensure consultation between faculties, teaching and learning centres and IT departments in the development and implementation of an ePortfolio system?
- To what degree do we want an ePortfolio platform to be integrated with our other enterprise systems (eg. learning management system, student management system)?

Teaching and Learning quality and outcomes
- What role can the Teaching and Learning Committee play to foster and encourage ePortfolio practice within the institution and in individual faculties?
- Can we identify and support champions in each faculty/school, to nurture and disseminate ePortfolio innovation and practice?
- How can we overcome resistance to change among academics who wish to focus primarily on their teaching and research in a particular discipline?
- What learning and teaching outcomes do we aim to achieve through the use of ePortfolios?
- How will ePortfolio activities be evaluated to ensure identified learning outcomes are being achieved?

Resource allocation and management
- What technical (ICT) resources are required for the development, management, promotion and evaluation of an ePortfolio system?
- What human resources are required for the development, management, promotion and evaluation of an ePortfolio system?
- Does existing student Internet access quota need to be modified to enable equitable access to ePortfolio?
- How much digital storage will we provide for each student?
- How long will we provide this digital storage for?
- How will these resources be funded?

Remember

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 to access the concept guides

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

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Australian ePortfolio Project

www.eportfoliopractice.qut.edu.au

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