Tip sheet – using ePortfolios and Mahara in FLO

ePortfolios are increasing in popularity among Higher Education Institutions as they can display digital information about someone's work in many creative ways such as: a collection of journal entries, a multimedia resource, an image, a padlet wall and many more. Furthermore, there is a potential for students to feel more engaged while preparing assignments using ePortfolios as they can transfer their work and skills to their professional life after graduating. Additionally, academics also benefit from curating and assessing ePortfolios as they offer lifelong learning opportunities for both themselves and their students. Building ePortfolios can be a process rather than an end result as academics and students learn digital skills while using the platform.

ePortfolio domains

ePortfolios can be used in many ways according to the learning and teaching goals of a discipline. According to the Centre for Recording Achievement (UK), an ePortfolio could be used for:

- A repository for artefacts
- A means of accessing personal information
- A means of presenting oneself and ones skills, qualities and achievements to others
- A means of collecting and selecting assessment evidence
- A guidance tool to support review and choice
- A means of sharing and collaborating
- A means of encouraging a sense of personal identity

Get started

In Australia, the increasing demand of ePortfolios knowledge exchange and professional support led to the creation of ePortfolios Australia in 2010 (Miller, 2016). This is professional volunteer network which shares ideas, resources and free articles on good ePortfolios practices. For more information, please visit www.eportfoliosaustralia.com.au.

If you are interested in using ePortfolios in your teaching and learning activities, there are a couple of questions that could guide you on its implementation. As a starting point, we have included some of the Australian ePortfolio Project questions for academics (2009, p.3):

- Do I think about the contribution I am making to students building the skills they need to gain employment in a dynamic, changing world?
- Will the introduction of ePortfolio learning require program redesign?
- What learning outcomes do I wish my students to have?
- Can ePortfolios really assist in the achievement of these learning goals?
- How are ePortfolios currently being used in my school/academic program?
- Should ePortfolio use be assessed? What will I assess – the product or the process?
- Do I have the time and energy required to adequately support ePortfolio implementation in my subject?
- Do I think I would benefit from professional development/training to enable me to effectively implement ePortfolios in my teaching?

Mahara in FLO

Once you have decided how you would like to introduce ePortfolios in your teaching, Mahara is the ePortfolio platform that you would be using with your students at Flinders University. Students and staff have free access to Mahara for as long as they have a FAN.

As Mahara is part of the FLO ecosystem, you can assess students' ePortfolio pages or collections via the assignment tool. To assess Mahara using the assignment tool, there are certain settings you need to consider- for further details please visit FLO Staff Support: Mahara eportfolio – Teaching tasks.

To discover what Mahara could offer, start using it yourself before introducing it to your students. You could create a Welcome or Teaching Philosophy page to explore the different functionalities that Mahara offers. Have a look at these exemplars for more innovative ePortfolios approaches:

- I teach who I am - but who am I? A collection of personal philosophies of teaching from Flinders University staff
- A Flinders University student's portfolio (PDF) A medical student kept a journal with each entry tagged with one of MD course learning outcomes (CLO). The student then set up a collection of pages that automatically collated the journal entries for each CLO. The student shared the entries with their learning coach, who can see a curated story about their development in each CLO
- Chris's FFOUT portfolio A previous staff member's portfolio created for Flinders Foundation of University Teaching (FFOUT) professional development
- Rob's portfolio Rob was an Architectural Technology student at Southampton Solent University; his portfolio shows his journey to becoming a professional
- Serhat's portfolio His home page provides a reflective overview of his Master of Distance Education coursework at Athabasca University and e-portfolio. The right column includes some sections from his resume.
- A reflective journal From a student at University of the Arts, London
- Michael's academic professional portfolio a great example of an extensive and rich portfolio. Also see Michael's blog post here
- Kathryn's digital thesis 'An A/r/tist in Wonderland: Exploring identity, Creativity and Digital Portfolios as A/r/tographer'

ePortfolios papers

- The whys and why nots of ePortfolios, Shelley Kinash (2012)

- Making Connections: Developing Students' Historical Thinking with Electronic Portfolios, Tracy Penny Light (2019)

- Winberg, C. and Pallit N. 2016. "I'm trying to practice good teaching": reconceptualising eportfolios for professional development in vocational higher education. British Journal of Educational Technology, Christine Winberg, (2015)

References

Australian ePortfolio Project, 2009, *ePortfolio concepts for academic staff,* Australian Learning & Teaching Council, QUT, viewed 12 March 2021, https://research.qut.edu.au/eportfolio/wp-content/uploads/sites/186/2017/11/AeP_conceptguide_academic_staff.pdf

Centre for Recording Achievement n.d, *Recording Achievement website,* UK, viewed 12 March 2021, http://www.recordingachievement.org/eportfolios/default.html

Miller, Allison, 2016. Professional Learning Ecosystem Support for ePortfolio Use in Australian Higher Education: An Historical Perspective. In *ePortfolios in Australian Universities*. Singapore: Springer Singapore, pp. 1–11.