

Student Portfolios: Background, Purpose, and Function

An online or ePortfolio is a digitised collection of artefacts and reflections purposefully compiled to share one's work, efforts, and progress (Milman, 2005). Rowley and Bennet (2016) found student immersion in the creative process and reflective practice of constructing an ePortfolio produced a strong 'sense of self' with regard to their future possible self, while Nguyen (2013) found it a space for many students to reflect upon their identity and create an online representation of their narrative. Portfolios support peer-learning through cooperation, communication and the giving and receiving of peer feedback as well as employability through sharing of developmental learning artefacts and reflections that identify skills, techniques and knowledge, including digital literacy (van Staden, 2019). Creation of a Portfolio is considered an important part of the constructivist learning process that requires technology mastery as well as evaluation of personal beliefs, philosophies, objectives and purpose (Milman, 2005).

Research by Thibodeaux et al. (2017) into continued or sustained ePortfolio use revealed that students preferred to have some control, ownership, and agency over the learning process in various developmental aspects of ePortfolio learning. In addition, social constructivist pedagogies are more likely to engage learners and promoted knowledge sharing and co-construction through the ePortfolio process. Students need to be given direction about how ePortfolios apply to their lives beyond the course or program. Ownership and autonomy through choice of platform allows students to focus on their own strengths and creativity (Pegrum & Oakley, 2017; Thibodeaux et al., 2017).

The short videos 'What is a portfolio?' (<https://youtu.be/C39vPmaWHKI>) and 'All about your portfolio' (<https://youtu.be/hVxGSwfHktU>) expound on this and share the four stages of portfolio development: collect, select, reflect, connect.

According to Barrett (2011) portfolios serve two main functions: process and product. Process is the story of learning and involves reflective practice, whereas product refers to documentation and potential showcase of achievement. Both may include assessment items. Roemmer-Nosseck & Zwiauer (2007) support the multi-functionality of portfolios and describe three potential purposes for ePortfolios in higher education: 1) support of individual learning (ePortfolio as process); 2) participation in the production and publication of knowledge (ePortfolio as product); and 3) as a means of supporting development of one's own voice within the university (community of learners).

The purpose and function of a portfolio very much depends on the audience intended. For example, teacher education students might show where they meet accreditation standards,

while Creative Arts students potentially need a more purposeful multimedia-linked window to the world to support employability. It is through these and other diverse needs that a more choice-based portfolio offering could be made to students at UniSQ. Benander et al. (2017) remind us that ePortfolio pedagogy is more important than the technology and that the function helps determine choice of platform. Three ePortfolio functions described by Benander et al. (2017) can each be a singular purpose or blended with attributes from all. These are:

- The Learning ePortfolio
- The Professional ePortfolio
- The Assessment ePortfolio

Variance in portfolio purpose, whether for employment, accreditation or assessment (or a combination of these and other factors), reflects the content and presentation and the inclusion of reflective practice.

As programs at UniSQ continue to develop the need for an effective portfolio option that has utility and flexibility to allow for different uses and combinations of these becomes more of a priority. In conjunction with this, options for portfolio creation must include student personalisation, autonomy, and choice.

The short video 'Why create a portfolio' (<https://youtu.be/qCX2ilo80DE>) expounds on this importance and provides 10 top reasons for creating a personal/professional portfolio.

The short video 'Reflective portfolios' (<https://youtu.be/AweYntbdrZg>) expounds on portfolios as both product and process with a focus on reflective practice. It also provides a list of resources.

Heeneman and Driessen (2017) discuss the purpose and success factors of implementing an ePortfolio in clinical settings in which the clinical supervisors play a critical role as a mentor. They outline how the ePortfolio acts as a tool to support entrustment decision-making as part of clinical education as well as enhancing development through reflection and assuring quality through assessment.

Considering ePortfolios for the purpose of assessment Barrett (2007) cautions against losing the stories in favour of the skills checklists. Of interest is the table below showing comparison of ePortfolios used as an assessment of learning and those that support assessment for learning (Barrett, 2007, p. 444).

Portfolios used for Assessment of Learning	Portfolios used for Assessment for Learning
Purpose of portfolio prescribed by institution	Purpose of portfolio agreed upon with learner
Artifacts mandated by institution to determine outcomes of instruction	Artefacts selected by learner to tell the story of their learning
Portfolio usually developed at the end of a class, term or program - time limited	Portfolio maintained on an ongoing basis throughout the class, term or program - time flexible
Portfolio and/or artifacts usually "scored" based on a rubric and quantitative data is collected for external audiences	Portfolio and artefacts reviewed with learner and used to provide feedback to improve learning
Portfolio is usually structured around a set of outcomes, goals or standards	Portfolio organisation is determined by learner or negotiated with mentor/advisor/teacher
Sometimes used to make high stakes decisions	Rarely used for high stakes decisions
Summative - what has been learned to date? (Past to present)	Formative - what are the learning needs in the future? (Present to future)
Requires Extrinsic motivation	Fosters Intrinsic motivation - engages the learner
Audience: external - little choice	Audience: learner, family, friends - learner can choose

Literature review (updated May 2023)

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Learning and Teaching Futures Portfolio

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