

## Summary of discussion and feedback sessions from the JISC workshop programme: How can e-Portfolios Support 21st Century Learning?

During the workshops participants were encouraged to discuss issues and provide feedback on a number of e-portfolio related questions. This document summarises those discussions based on notes taken by Helen Richardson from the Centre for Recording Achievement.

**Sections 1 and 2 relate questions asked during the presentation “[Effect Practice with e-Portfolios](#)” from Lisa Gray (JISC Programme Manager, e-Learning).**

**Section 3 provides the issues and concerns voiced by participants.**

**Section 4 gives a summary of feedback gathered from participants following investigation of the JISC infoNet [e-Portfolios infoKit](#).**

### Section 1. What is an e-portfolio?

- A record of learning and achievement
- A way of sharing information – it can be made accessible to a number of people.
- Showcasing achievement/engagement of learners
- A reflective tool – for teachers to reflect on their practice
- Assessment /verification tool – it can widen the range of what can be used for assessment purposes, including collaborative/community shared learning for assessment purposes.
- Provides evidence of skills to employers – a central repository of evidence of skills and competences
- A repository – a collection of information , a collection of electronic items/e-tools – a presentation/ gateway either learner or institutional
- A means of capturing formal and informal learning
- Accreditation for CPD/ professional body requirements.
- Use by awarding bodies for assessment
- A collection of assets to evidence meeting employer requirements – but this needs the skill of mapping learning to employer requirements ( noted also under ‘issues’).
- Encouraging process of reflection
- Gives feedback
- A means to bring together a student’s experience
- A personal portfolio for life, using e.g. Flickr, Facebook etc
- An institutional portfolio tool for its uses
- Wider than an assessment tool
- Digital collection of ‘stuff’ A collection of EVIDENCE to (demonstrate) evidence learning
- Diversity is important - large repository of information, both structured and unstructured; showcasing competences
- A means of having an element of control over resources, - useful as a community resource, for community development
- A means of representing self to different audiences, - showcasing achievements.

- A repository - both structured and unstructured; a means of enabling certain workflows to happen - e.g. Peer review or mentor review
- A place to record and reflect on learner development
- it's important to distinguish between e-portfolio which includes guidance and process tools for the learner, and social networking sites, without guidance etc.

## Section 2. For what purposes might learners create e-portfolios and why?

- For communication and presentation
- Interactivity – can invite others to come in/share learning/ collaborate across organisational boundaries, such as in support for work placements
- Assessment – an uploaded asset may be used for assessing/ accrediting core skills from several perspectives, e.g. an asset may be used as evidence to gain credits for ICT/teamwork and communication .
- To support lifelong learning
- Providing support for process
- To develop skill of mapping learning to employer requirements.
- PDP/CPD – to support reflective practice for personal and professional development. For example, the HE Academy is encouraging the use of e-portfolio for professional accreditation.
- Supports lifelong learning – but standards, and standards compliant tools, are required for exporting from/importing to, another tool to support lifelong learning (noted also under issues).
- Ability to communicate more effectively to support distance learning – e.g. to evidence process of work placement experience
- Means to support work based learning both on and off campus
- Moving from paper to 'e' – the benefit of multimedia giving a richer picture of learning
- A means for students to take their information with them when they leave for lifelong purposes (although interoperability and accessibility may be issues here – see issues section).
- Online communication between learners, teachers – 'a social network'
- Something for everyone – reflection- but - to make them work for any one purpose need a HUGE AMOUNT OF SUPPORT plus CULTURAL SHIFT
- Multifaceted: learn from lessons of why a VLE hasn't worked.
- Collate, share, re-purpose to support those processes.
- Evidencing PGCE requirements – a medium they are familiar with, appealing to younger learners
- Helping to write references
- Helping to support reflective processes
- Teacher training to evidence reflective process
- Connecting placement practice with theory – personalising learning
- Compare purposes of e-portfolios for creativity 'owned' by learner, with VLEs for Institutional purposes
- Evidencing learning/ 'ordering' thoughts
- Informal learning – using as a blog / diary
- Benefits? – saving on paper/'ordering' thoughts

- Reflective practice – reflect back on previous course situation “where I was and where I am now” showing progress – ‘how much a person has moved on’.
- Reflection is ‘hard’ – not intuitive.
- Clarity of purpose is essential - e-portfolios must be integrated with learners' studies.
- It's necessary to show benefits to learners
- Can be used to provide a continuous record of workplace/work placement achievement: allows use of multimedia to demonstrate and evidence achievement.
- Personal reflections
- A tool to match learners to appropriate courses - either as institutional or self-select basis.
- Benefits for placement students; or learners 'on edge' of learning, Multimedia used to tell story in different ways.
- To demonstrate a range of competences; using less paper/less time - allows a more authentic assessment than 'traditional' assessment methods.

### Section 3. Issues and concerns

#### *Transferability/portability:*

- How can learners take their e-portfolios with them once they leave the institution?
- Standards, and standards compliant tools, required for exporting from/importing to another tool to support lifelong learning.
- Technical issues of Portability – retaining functionality of working e-portfolio, - importance of standards or external hosting to ensure that portfolio information linked to assets, and not just the assets, can be used within another organisation.
- Are any e-portfolio tools truly lifelong learning yet? E.g. how long might they be hosted by an HEI? Alumni access benefits HEI as well as p/g – prompting access to (future) University provided facilities /courses such as CPD.
- Scaffolding needed or not? Not having a blank canvas – not just button pushing but pedagogy or framework
- Distinction between interoperability and portability – Exporting not just the assets but also exporting connectivity between assets and linking text (a competency claim for which asset is the evidence) and links to external files etc.
- Continuity for lifelong/life wide learning – connectivity for sharing practice across /between sectors – School- FE- HE – CPD. – thinking around standards.
- Considerations for social networking
- We considered possibility of importing ep’s from the workplace and other institutions for part-time learners. Questions of motivation arise if learners feel they are having to duplicate effort over 2 separate systems.
- Issues arise when systems use different terminology – for example: Mahara and Moodle define “roles” differently. Mapping is required in many cases.
- Effective interoperability should be able to handle differing levels of complexity between systems
- Leap2a framework does not support transferring different competency frameworks yet

### *Ownership and permissions:*

- Tensions between institutional and learner ownership
- “Accessibility is important! Accessibility needs to be permitted – there may a conflict around ‘ownership’ “
- An alternative approach is that different people ‘own’ or ‘have an interest in’ different parts:
- e.g. individually owned parts for presentation purposes, institutional ownership of parts for assessment purposes
- Separating out ‘who sees what?’ especially around assessment, needs to be clearly defined, understood, and supported by the tools.
- Importance of distinguishing ‘tool’ from ‘process’.
- ‘Learner control’ issues – tutors not wanting to ‘let go’ /wanting to retain ‘control’ of learners’ e-portfolios
- Regarding staff developing e-portfolios – tensions and challenges (e.g. resources, time, training) –clarifying requirements and benefits can help, e.g. expectation to use e-portfolio as appraisal preparation doc etc.
- Ownership – who owns what? There are issues of trust about who can view what areas, and in some applications (e.g. Mahara), permissions are understood to allow either ‘no-one from outside’ or ‘fully public’
- Ownership - tensions between institutionally provided tools and learner ownership

### *Resourcing e-portfolio implementation:*

- **Implementation:** requires appropriate business case – and gathering evidence to support this. The JISC publication ‘Tangible benefits of e-learning’ has case studies and evidence to draw on.
- **Staffing:** Assessors are expected to mark online – are they ready? What are the training and resource issues for this?
- **Recognition of resourcing change(s) in practice** – particularly for assessment purposes, and particularly in FE – people may have selected their chosen employment for elements of its practice – ‘a people practice’ f2f practice with visits; changing to online practice, involving sitting at a pc may be much less attractive practice for some assessors.
- **Resourcing sustainability** – life after a pilot implementation? Technical issues from ‘in development’ to ‘live’ tool
- **Resourcing space or hosting solution?** Space as an issue –‘ it shouldn’t be now’ – as very cheap, however, although space may be cheap technical know-how /hosting is expensive. Who pays costs of continued access? An alternative beneficial approach if an organisation cannot be provider – is a hosted solution (where hoster provides technical know how).
- **Skills** - Front end skills can be a barrier, and added cost more than equipment costs
- **Environmental issue** – less paper but more electricity, more CO<sub>2</sub>.

### *Engagement:*

- How do you get Senior Manager buy-in?
- Ideas/approaches: – speaker from another institution - speak their language, quality improvement or money – and align with business plan.
- Approaches to effective staff engagement – senior manager support, compulsory professional development sessions, get HR on board – staff CPD/appraisals/get staff involved in identifying the need for the tool. Back up with research –evidence (see ‘Tangible Benefits’ publication.

- How to engage employers/mentors/teachers? – This may link into resourcing issues for implementation, to support appropriate staff development and training.
- Staff experience is that e-portfolio is imposed on them, so there is less buy-in than for students, who ‘buy into it’ as they have the expectation that it is something they are ‘required to create’ – for purposes of career planning, evidence of skills for applications, a reflective tool to enable these.
- It still seems acceptable to say “I don’t do IT!” – When will this attitude become unacceptable? By contrast, there is no opt out for staff or pupils in primary schools. IT may become a ‘3<sup>rd</sup> key skill’ required to level 2.
- Visual appeal of the tool/ e-portfolio pages is important for the user/learner. Comparing two tools – one has some pages provided only as ‘build mode’ – tool needs ‘view mode’ with all pages, preferably that can be tailored to a personal view mode.
- Engaging mature students can be an issue – how to support their requirements to help them to use an e-portfolio especially open/distance learning spaces ‘wherever they want’ , either print or online.
- Achieving large scale uptake – by both staff and learner engagement, without making it compulsory? Provide all new staff with an e-portfolio account (as they expect to have and use email).
- How to demonstrate benefits without making use compulsory – enlist help of champions? Provide evidence of impact? Potential of alumni offering
- Risk that staff see it as a burden and students see it as a bolt on if not properly implemented
- Duncan Gillespie pointed out that there is conflict regarding institutional funding. Interaction via the eportfolio is not face to face time.
- We mentioned that the timing of the training and implementation is important
- Student training - don’t expect that students will naturally pick it up. They need training. They do not have uniform skills (differences in age and background especially in FE). Skills using social networking do not easily carry over to educational systems – many students see them as entirely distinct.

## Assessment

- Assessing e-portfolios - for example, in place of assessing a dissertation- Guidance required on how much to assess, and criteria on how to select areas to assess, e.g. How to select 2 from 6 competences for assessment.
- Verification of a learner’s entries in an e-portfolio for assessment; does e-portfolio assessment lead to strategic behaviour by learners? - how can tutor/assessor be confident that the level of CLAIM for evidence or reflection relating to a competency is appropriate to the task set, - that learner is neither over or under confident in representing their achievement? Plagiarism issues were discussed – PebblePad now has a TurnItIn plugin (July 2010)
- Also discussed that plagiarism is harder in a personal record of reflective learning
- Peer to Peer assessment – often a need to encourage peer assessors to go beyond assessing “what have you done?” and think about “how well have you done it?”. There are also important issues of anonymity to consider which some systems allow.
- Question was raised – by assessing it do you than kill it? It is supposed to be a student-owned resource. By insisting it be assessable does this then institutionalise it?
- Neil Currant suggested not assessing the whole e-portfolio but asking students to write a final overall reflective statement and assessing that or conducting vivas.

- We thought about how an e-portfolio creates a story out of learning.

#### ***Inclusion and accessibility:***

- use of Flash based applications can be a difficulty – an approach to overcome this is to use ‘Accessapps’ – see <http://www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/accessapps/> - “over 50 open source and freeware assistive technology applications which can be entirely used from a USB stick on a Windows computer“. It’s important to get the Institutional Disability Adviser to set up a user group of students *before* selecting a tool.

#### ***Drivers:***

- What are the drivers for e-portfolio use and implementation? – there are different drivers for different purposes – so there is a wide range of drivers which reflect the wide range of purposes. (Again links into resourcing issues, and business case.)

#### ***Managing expectations:***

- Learners expecting an immediate turn around/response.
- Expectations may link back to e-portfolio purposes, or other factors; e.g. does good visual appeal encourage greater learner expectations?

#### ***Boundaries:***

- Recognition of the wide range of tools available, beyond the ‘traditional’ tools, including non-educational social/professional networking tools (such as ‘linked in’).
- Should there be interlinkage, or boundaries, between tools for personal or professional use? This brings us back to *permissions* and the need for fine tuning of learner control of access to particular areas.

#### ***Sustainability/longevity of stored data***

- Stability/reliability/longevity of data storage/repository – must remain available at least throughout lifecycle of the assessment requirements
- Copyright/IPR-Assets – insuring content originating from others is acknowledged/allowed.
- ‘Be Aware’ some publishers (especially of images and video on net) waiting to ‘trick you’ – even for use of a tiny number of pixels of an image can command huge costs.
- Issues of bandwidth

### **Section 4. JISC infoNet infokit activity session**

#### **Section of infokit explored**

1. Ownership and IPR
2. IT skills
3. Case Studies ‘EPICS’
4. Learner perspectives
5. Ownership and IPR
6. Lifelong learning for people with low literacy
7. ‘6 steps to e-portfolio based learning’ – booklet/paper publication

#### **Why did you choose this section?**

1. To address the question: ‘how can learners take their e-portfolios with them then they leave the institution?’
2. Quite a high level of IT skills are required to be able to work independently

3. To gain a perspective from applying theory to real life scenarios – such as around employability and skills
4. To see what works in terms of engaging learners and seeing how they react to e-portfolio introduction
5. Students are worried about ownership
6. Professional interest
7. Learner engagement – including at Programme level, as distinct from Institutional level. Drawing things together from case studies in paper-based report – not online?

**How did you navigate to this section?**

1. JISC Infokit, contents bar
2. Online media: Choosing, implementing – IT skills; Effective practice publication: Contents – A Manager’s view
3. Initially looking at Employability and Skills, followed the relevant projects’ links
4. Picked from menu
5. Clicked on the links
6. Contents list
7. Institutional perspective- Embedding – Choosing, implementing and embedding (online version?)

**Did it contain the information that you expected?**

1. Yes
2. Both mediums contained examples of case studies
3. To a degree- I was look for specific stats on usage
4. Largely yes – lots of good examples of project work.
5. Yes
6. -
7. Some – enablers and inhibitors

**If not, what did you expect that you couldn’t find here?**

1. n/a
2. n/a
3. More detail on feedback from learners/staff
4. I would have liked more in the way of guidance. Perhaps I missed itk, but a ‘checklist of key considerations’ is/would be very helpful in every section.
5. n/a
6. Implications of low literacy skills on usability of e-portfolio systems – low IT skills are covered elsewhere in the infokit.
7. Does what it says: /embedding from institutional perspectives – also looking for programme level perspective. – found in institutional checklist.

**Is the information easy to follow and understand?**

1. Yes
2. Easy to understand, and using the online method it was easy to read experiences of learners/managers/professional bodies; interesting from a variety of perspectives.
3. Yes – well laid out and easy to navigate.
4. Yes
5. Yes
- 6.
7. Yes – very good – mixture of info, quotes and links to resources.

**Any other comments about this section?**

1. -

2. -
3. First impressions – lots of useful information
4. -
5. -
6. Not all lifelong learners are targeting HE as this section implies.
7. Great resource! – good for dipping in for specific issues/guidance. Perhaps not so much for someone with 2 minutes, who wants ‘information at a glance’ – ie a quick summary.