

Smith, Christine; Nerantzi, Chrissi

## E-Portfolios: Assessment as learning using social media. Capturing conversational learning examples drawn from academic development

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# E-Portfolio an der Schnittstelle von Studium und Beruf



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## Vorwort der Herausgeber

Wir freuen uns, den Leserinnen und Lesern ein neues Buch der Reihe „Medien in der Wissenschaft“ vorstellen zu können. In diesem Band wird das Thema „Schnittstelle zwischen Hochschule und Berufsleben“ aus verschiedenen Perspektiven problematisiert und praktizierte Lösungen und Erfahrungen werden unterbreitet. Gleichzeitig werden fachlich-theoretische Erörterungen und Reflexionen mit der notwendigen Tiefe aufgegriffen, die dazu beitragen, die Herausforderungen des Bereichs zwischen Hochschule und Berufsleben zu verstehen. Die gemeinsame Leitfrage, die den Beiträgen zugrunde liegt, lautet: „Welche Funktionen kann ein E-Portfolio in der Schnittstelle zwischen Hochschule und Berufsleben übernehmen?“

Vor wenigen Wochen stellte uns ein Kollege die Frage: „Wieso seid Ihr Euch sicher, dass dieses Buch keine Eintagsfliege wird? Denn dieses Schicksal teilen sich im Bereich E-Learning die meisten Bücher, da es viele Publikationen zu denselben Fragestellungen gibt – also: more of the same.“ Dieser Einwand und die damit verbundene Aussicht ist nicht attraktiv und veranlasste uns zum wiederholten Male, über die Begründung der Publikation nachzudenken: „Wozu nochmals ein Buch über ein elektronisches Tool?“

Am Anfang standen unzählige formelle und informelle Gespräche mit Personen aus ganz unterschiedlichen Tätigkeitsbereichen zum Thema „Schnittstelle zwischen Hochschule und Berufsleben.“ Schnell wurde klar, dass die Begründung für ein Buch zu diesem Themenfeld nicht alleine durch die Beschäftigung mit E-Portfolios und dem technischen Substrat an sich gelingen kann, sondern in der Frage nach den Funktionen liegen muss, die es in dem Zusammenhang übernehmen kann. Damit wird einerseits klar, welche Personengruppen für Beiträge eingeladen werden sollten und andererseits welchen Aufbau das Buch haben wird.

Die Publikation folgt keiner theoriegeleiteten Systematik oder Portfoliotypologie, sondern orientiert sich vielmehr am Bedarf der Praxis und sucht nach plausiblen fachwissenschaftlichen und praktischen Antworten – im Wissen darum, dass die technische Lösung in wenigen Jahren abgelöst werden wird. Die Kunst besteht darin, Nachhaltigkeit mit nicht nachhaltigen Mitteln, wie es die Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien nun einmal sind, zu sichern.

Wer sich schon länger mit bildungstechnologischen Themen beschäftigt, weiss von unzähligen virtuellen Plattformen und digitalen Tools zu berichten, die fulminant angepriesen wurden und später kaum hörbar von der Bühne verschwanden. Ein solches Schicksal kann niemand im Voraus erahnen und das macht auch die Qualität und Herausforderung unseres gemeinsamen Tuns aus.

Also können wir die Frage, ob mit diesem Buch eine Publikationseintagsfliege vorliegt, mit hinreichender Sicherheit verneinen, denn im Vordergrund steht die Funktion von E-Portfolios zur Lösung von Problemen, die wir in der Einführung ausführen und begründen. Solange diese Probleme bestehen, können wir mit der Publikation einen Beitrag zu ihrer Lösung leisten, auch wenn neue Plattformen und digitale Tools auf den Markt kommen. Ob sich aber der- einst Antiquare oder Archäologen um diesen Band reißen werden, können wir zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt schlicht nicht voraussagen. Wir sind mit dem aktuellen Ergebnis zufrieden, einen Beitrag zur besseren Gestaltung der Schnittstelle zwischen Hochschule und Berufsleben leisten zu können.

Wir dürfen den Leserinnen und Lesern einen Sammelband mit Beiträgen von Universitätsprofessorinnen und -professoren, Personalentwicklern und Softwareingenieuren bis hin zu Studierenden und Lernenden an Berufsschulen vorlegen. Auch wenn letztere keine Hochschule besuchen, so geben sie einen aufschlussreichen Einblick in Nutzungsmöglichkeiten von E-Portfolios, von denen die Hochschulen profitieren sollten.

Zum Schluss bedanken wir uns ganz herzlich bei den Autorinnen und Autoren der Beiträge, dem Editorial Board der Gesellschaft für Medien in der Wissenschaft (GMW) und all unseren „critical friends“, die uns immer wieder mit hartnäckigen Fragen begleiteten.

Damian Miller, Pädagogische Hochschule Thurgau (PHTG, Schweiz)

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*Christine Smith, Chrissi Nerantzi*

## **E-Portfolios: Assessment as Learning Using Social Media Capturing Conversational Learning Examples Drawn from Academic Development**

### **Abstract**

This case study relates to the use of a social media platform as an E-Portfolio system. The E-Portfolio system has been used by the authors in the area of Academic Development and specifically within a “Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice” (PGCAP) at the UK University of Salford. The PGCAP is a blended programme, primarily for new-to-teaching academics as well as professionals in learning support roles at the university, but also attracting more experienced staff wanting to update and acquire new skills and approaches to teaching and support of learning.

The E-Portfolio enables participants to develop their understanding of learning and teaching in HE, around contemporary pedagogies and versatile and innovative practices in the digital age. It also provides a space for participants to demonstrate their achievements. Successful completion of the programme leads to a recognised teaching qualification in HE, as well as eligibility for Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.

The E-Portfolio provides ongoing opportunities for developing reflective habits and professional practices in learning and knowledge-building: through media-rich reflection and in asynchronous discursive conversations with tutors and peers. The E-Portfolio acts as a learning space for collaborative learning and peer support beyond the classroom and is also used for assessment purposes. To date, the E-Portfolio system has been used and evaluated with three cohorts and the approach designed at the outset has been refined and developed, in light of evaluative evidence from performance and feedback.

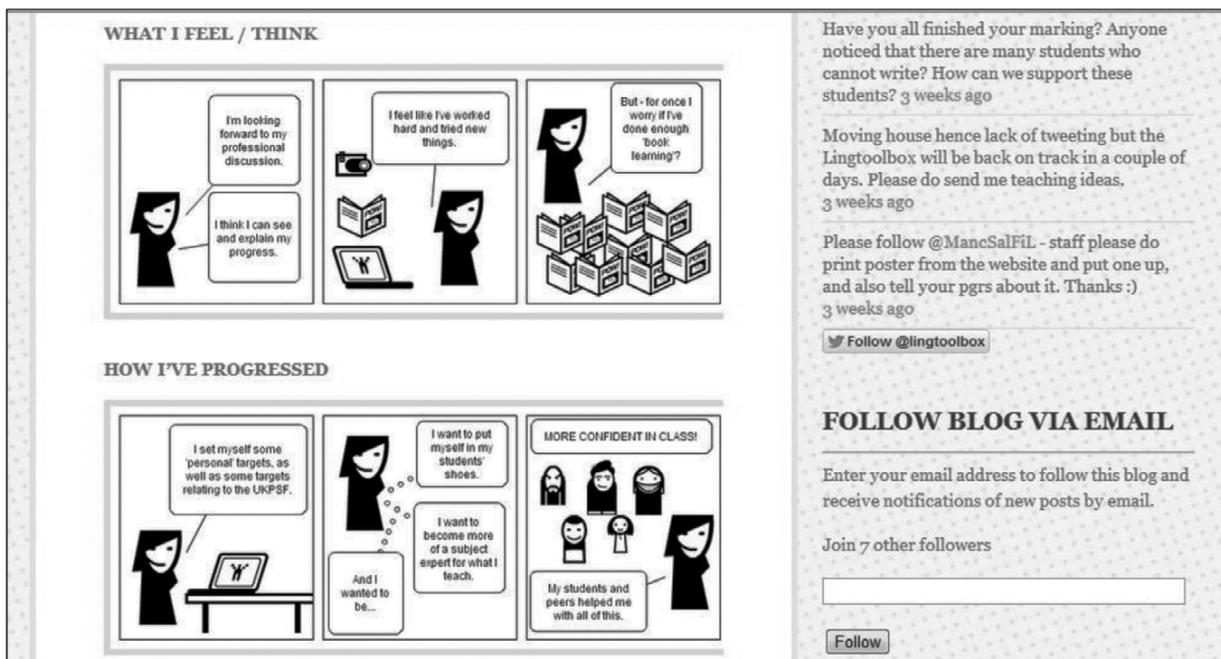


Fig. 1: Portfolio Cartoon

The authors share their thinking about the evolving use of an E-Portfolio for assessment and the pedagogical rationale on which it is based. How this approach could be adapted for different learning and teaching contexts is discussed as a means to promote learning in Higher Education as a more reflective, connected and creative experience but also one which has the potential to motivate and connect individuals and groups of learners both within and beyond course-based or even institutional boundaries.

## 1 Introduction

This chapter presents a case study of the use of an e-portfolio, focusing on its use as a form of social media and for assessment purposes. By ‘assessment’ we mean the use of an E-Portfolio for both formative and for summative assessment purposes or, as Barrett suggests, assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning (Barrett, 2004). More strongly, we find resonance with Earl (2003) who proposes assessment as learning. We draw upon the “Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice” (PGCAP) at the UK University of Salford for our case study, in which we present how assessment acts as the driving force for learning through use of an e-portfolio.

Our focus in this chapter is on an interpretation of an E-Portfolio as both a product of digital artefacts and a process (in accord with e.g. Keegan, 2009). We therefore regard the E-Portfolio as a tool and an environment that is created by the learner to articulate and reflect upon their learning experiences (both formal

and informal) and to select and present their learning achievements for summative assessment.

First, we briefly review the literature around E-Portfolios (and portfolios more generally), looking at uses and perceived benefits as well as the challenges presented in use in the Higher Education context. We explore how the use of E-Portfolios can align with contemporary educational design thinking around ‘good learning’ and teaching. We also outline how, in particular, E-Portfolios can be used for assessment, balancing between the apparent dichotomy of their use for formative and developmental purposes and their use for performance and demonstration of achievement(s) in summative assessment (Barrett & Carney, 2005).

The PGCAP case study can be depicted as an effective but evolving and adaptive use of the E-Portfolio for assessment. We present the rationale underpinning this use of E-Portfolios on the PGCAP, before identifying how the design and use has evolved, drawing upon evaluation and feedback from participants and tutors. Finally, we consider how the use of the E-Portfolio as demonstrated in the PGCAP case study might be adapted for use in other HE contexts.

## **2 Uses and Benefits of E-Portfolios**

According to Klenowski (2002, p. 1) a portfolio can be used for development and for assessment, for the acquisition of teaching skills and reflective practice and for professional and vocational preparation. Donnelly (2003) also proposes their use for developing autonomous learners. Certainly, the portfolio has been recognised as an effective means of not only collecting personal evidence of knowledge, skills and achievements for summative assessment; but also providing opportunities for reflecting on learning and for hosting records of that reflection (Grant, Strivens & Marshall, 2004). Furthermore, an E-Portfolio can also serve social purposes and community building functions in its capacity as a form of social media. We explore some of these uses as attributes of assessment as learning, relevant to the development and enhancement of Higher Education academic staff in their professional practices and as a means to attest to their achievements in validation arenas.

In formative assessment and development, an E-Portfolio can be used for the promotion of learning i.e. assessment as learning: to promote self-assessment and the enhancement of self-evaluatory skills. The processes in effectively using an E-Portfolio involve the learner in self-evaluation, active monitoring, interpretation of experiences, reflection and critique of practice (Klenowski, 2004; Donnelly, 2003). The learner engages in identifying knowledge gaps, leading to new objective setting and further activity (Ellis & Goodyear, 2010). A portfolio

that includes a requirement for self-reflection supports learning if the developmental nature of the portfolio process is sustained and provides opportunities for learners to self-evaluate their own growth over time, including by comparison to others (Kear, 2011).

The E-Portfolio can also be instrumental in the acquisition of teaching skills. For example, Grant & Huebner (1998) suggest portfolio use for developing the habit of mind that views collaborative learning as a way of coming to know in teaching (see also Trowler & Knight, 2000). The E-Portfolio can be used to enable learners to report on their teaching experiences and to engage in discourse with peers, all within a communal but private (to the group) space.

Criticality in reflection on one's own practice is highly prized and indicative of higher level skill and understanding in academic development. Zubizarretta in particular, identifies E-Portfolios as valuable for systematic reflection by learners over time, on their own learning processes as well as to 'develop the aptitudes, skills and habits that come from critical reflection' (Zubizarretta, 2004, p 15).

An E-Portfolio can also be used for social purposes and has been valued widely as a flexible environment for connecting for collaboration and knowledge-building among a community of peers or learners and tutors as well as for access and immediacy of feedback (Stefani, Mason & Pegler, 2007). Bolliger & Shepard (2010) report on an empirical study of online courses in which they found E-Portfolios positively impacted some students' perception of communication connectedness and learning, and helped foster online learning communities.

The communal aspects of an E-Portfolio have further been valued in promoting creative engagement in discourse and knowledge-building. Attention to the use of E-Portfolios as a collaborative learning environment, 'holds the promise of more satisfied, supportive and active learners, committed to the group's learning goals' (Haythornwaite and Andrews, 2011, p. 111-112). Online collaboration that adopts a critical dialogue perspective can provide learners with opportunities to articulate their social and cultural experiences and to develop critical thinking (Ferreday & Hodgson, 2006). The purposeful, collaborative and community aspects of portfolio building (Dirckinck-Holmfeld, McConnell & Hodgson, 2012) have been especially important to our case study, as discussed below. Zubizarretta also attests that E-Portfolios involve 'students in a critically reflective collaborative process that augments learning as a community endeavour' (Zubizarretta 2009, p. xxvii)

Active experimentation with media-rich learning technologies has been a further beneficial purpose for use of E-Portfolios. E-Portfolio systems enable the integration of video and audio e.g. in podcasts or video diaries, as well as text-based communication. The range of tools available in the E-Portfolio have been found to motivate experimentation and for promoting learners to think creatively in how they express and represent their thinking, experiences and understanding.

By so doing, the use of the E-Portfolio as a developmental process is claimed to contribute to confidence building, and giving further motivation to engage with the E-Portfolio concept (Clark & Adamson, 2009). Others suggest E-Portfolios help learners to document their experiences and to share them with others, and by so doing, they also offer the potential to encourage the sharing of more representative pictures (e.g. in video and audio formats) of themselves than in representations as abstracted and tidied up accounts: i.e. those traditionally associated with text-based reflections (Bolliger & Shepard, 2010).

## **2.1 Challenges in using E-Portfolios**

Mabry (1999) warns there can be mismatches between purpose and paradigms in new forms of assessment such as when using a portfolio. It therefore becomes crucial for educational designers and participants to articulate their understanding of the rationale for using the E-Portfolio and determine how alignment between paradigm, tasks and activities can be best effected.

For the learner, it is important that support is offered while developing familiarity to use the E-Portfolio before its use for summative assessment (Clark & Adamson, 2009). Learners need time with tutor support to develop the cognitive processes of critical reflection, which will help them develop their own E-Portfolio effectively. They also need time to practically master the E-Portfolio tool since e.g. Beresford (2010) suggests learners can find it difficult to learn and master the software or system.

There are also issues to address around consistency and equity in the preparation of tutors for, and in undertaking the assessment of E-Portfolios. This is especially true when E-Portfolios are used in diverse and creative ways by different learners.

Assessing consistently can be problematic (Klenowski, 2002) because the tasks undertaken as part of the portfolio are not necessarily standardised. Reliability in consistency and equity can be enhanced through tutor assessor discussions, internal sampling and moderation, and through external Quality Assurance processes including external examiner sampling across learners and across tutors/assessors. But it is clear the assessment of portfolios can add significantly to tutors' workloads (Klenowski, 2002, p. 86) as well as time for tutors to undertake initial training and for the development of community, including among the assessors.

### 3 Aligning use of E-Portfolios with ‘good learning’

In light of the review above, we suggest a systematic approach for E-Portfolio design in tools and activities and assessment based around principles identified for ‘good learning’ (Ellis & Goodyear, 2010; but see also e.g. Shuell, 1992; Biggs, 2003; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Wenger, 1998). Good learning can be characterized according to Ellis and Goodyear (2010, p. 23) as learning (and indirectly, teaching) that is:

- Active – involving learners in doing things, being engaged in practice but guided by relevant tutor support and scaffolding in undertaking the designed tasks and activities that build their E-Portfolios.
- Conversational and interactive – developing ideas, acquiring ideas and checking ideas with peers and tutors around meaningful tasks as collaborative learning and knowledge-building.
- Extensive – with learners constructing their own understandings by drawing from working knowledge, experience and perspective sharing within a community of practice.
- Situated and hard to transfer – hence the need for the learner to build their E-Portfolio around authentic practices that are situated in practice, culture and community.
- Challenging – learning needs to offer challenge and disturb accepted views or preconceptions and ideas to enable creative knowledge-building as well as to be experimental and creative for confidence-building and extending one’s professional repertoire including in demonstration of progress and achievements.
- Individual– involving learner awareness of individual agency and personal orientation to learning. The E-Portfolio is a learner-centred, personalisable space to gather thoughts and experience and from which to document one’s own learning process and progress, as well as to use it as a dossier collating specific artifacts.
- Cumulative – good learning is about building on prior learning experiences, revisiting and refining thinking. Building the E-Portfolio on experiences, tasks and activities as well as discussions and from self- or peer-evaluation and reflections, enables the accumulation of artefacts to document progress in learning.
- Goal oriented – learning needs to have purpose to motivate and an exchange value. An E-Portfolio can be used in formal, summative assessment when the public elements of the portfolio are assessed against articulated goals for learning. These might include self-determined and peer-set objectives, as well as formal intended learning outcomes.
- Self-regulated E-Portfolios are dossiers of individual learning and development, put together under the learner’s control and choice, including diverse and personal elements in a variety of formats and forms. The E-Portfolio can

be used to promote critical thinking by the learner, including in reflection, self-assessment and engagement in metacognition.

We propose designing for good learning in E-Portfolio building has the potential to foster metacognitive awareness in terms of knowledge, skills and experience: e.g. in knowledge about what one knows; in skills in what one is doing; and in experience in reasoning about one's current cognitive/affective state (Hacker, 1998). Levels of student engagement and the development of metacognitive skills have a measurable effect on academic achievement and performance (Clark & Adamson, 2009).

Later in the chapter, we identify how principles for good learning and teaching have specifically informed the pedagogic design of the E-Portfolio in accord with our commitment to assessment as learning that is used on the PGCAP programme at the UK University of Salford. In other words, we see the E-Portfolio as providing an integral environment for high stakes assessment that is both formative and summative (Knight, 2002).

### **3.1 E-Portfolios for Assessment as Learning**

There are those who have elected to use E-Portfolios from dissatisfaction with traditional quantitative methods of assessment, seen as bounded, fixed and rigid eg in the marking/grading of products (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). It is argued the use of E-Portfolios offers opportunity to promote assessment as learning: in making more explicit the essential relationships between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. The E-Portfolio offers a means for (more) authentic assessments (Bolliger & Shepard, 2010). It can be seen as a means by which, in assessment, judgments around understanding and process can be made, as well as a means by which to judge the strengths and weaknesses demonstrated. This holds resonance with e.g. Glaser (1984) who argues assessment needs to be a judgment not just about competence now, but also about competence essential for the future by seeing assessment in part as a development of self-regulatory learning. It corresponds with a socio-constructive perspective view in which formative assessment acts as 'a social interaction between tutor and learner, intended to have a positive impact on learning' (Torrance & Pryor, 1998, p. 10).

The E-Portfolio is valued for its student-centred focus: in which the learner can be involved and make decisions about their learning goals, the activities to undertake to progress their learning, and about how evidence of that learning is demonstrated. An E-Portfolio can be used in enabling learners to make decisions about the assessment criteria against which learning will be judged, possibly even participating in that judgment also. An E-Portfolio may be used to ena-

ble recognition of individual learning abilities to be accommodated. Certainly, the action in portfolio-building affords the learner a means of demonstrating evidence and awareness of learning and growth over time, through especially e.g. learning logs and reflective commentaries.

There are apparent tensions in use of a tool/environment for summative assessment purposes and its use in assessment as part of ongoing learning or developmental purposes, i.e. in formative assessment (Barrett & Carney, 2004). However, the demand for an environment/tool that supports both formative development and subsequent presentation or reporting upon achievements in HE teaching is appealing, and seemingly is offered by the e-portfolio. The E-Portfolio fulfils the need for an accommodating and responsive tool that supports gathering relevant evidence, engaging in discursive knowledge-building and professional development activities with peers and tutors, as well as working as a presentation tool for sharing the products from learning activities, for assessment. In this regard, the E-Portfolio offers a multi-faceted and flexible environment for engaging with peers and tutors, and for evidencing the realisation of relevant achievement at the point of summative assessment (Stefani, Mason & Pegler, 2007).

#### **4 The PGCAP Case Study: Introduction**

This case study centres on the “Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice” (PGCAP) to explore how social media as an e-portfolio, is being employed for ongoing, open and collaborative learning opportunities and for assessment, in the field of academic development.

An evaluation of the E-Portfolio use on the PGCAP was conducted over a period of one academic year, involving three cohorts of participants, from which this case study derives. We describe the E-Portfolio intervention and also express how it has evolved, including the issues and challenges faced. Findings from the evaluation lead us to make some recommendations on how E-Portfolios could be used in Academic Development as well as in other Higher Education professional areas and disciplines.

The PGCAP is a multidisciplinary postgraduate programme, primarily for new-to-teaching academics and professional staff who support learning at the UK’s University of Salford, but with modular components also made available to more experienced academic staff for ongoing development in the acquisition of new skills and approaches to teaching and support of learning and for updating. Successful completion of the programme leads to a recognised teaching qualification in Higher Education and eligibility for Fellowship of the UK’s Higher Education Academy. The PGCAP consists of a core module on Learning and

Teaching in Higher Education and four optional modules. These are entitled: Assessment and Feedback for Learning; Application of Learning Technologies; Curriculum Design and Programme Leadership; and Flexible, Distance and Online Learning. Participants are required to take the core module and one of the optional modules to successfully complete the PGCAP.

Assessment is used on the PGCAP as a driving force for learning. It is an integrated aspect of the programme's teaching and learning cycle and for this reason, assessment is e-portfolio-based across the whole of the programme. Participants are asked to assemble assessment components in their individual E-Portfolio but many of the components are derived from engagement with resources, personal reflections, peer-to-peer and collaborative activities, as well as discourse among the learning community. The E-Portfolios are used to generate opportunities for participants to connect with peers, tutors and the wider academic community, as well as extending engagement, increasing motivation and creativity eg in encouraging active experimentation with learning technologies.

Freely available social media are used to create the E-Portfolios. Currently, we use Wordpress<sup>1</sup>, We believe the E-Portfolio helps participants to bring together their formal, informal and non-formal learning.

**REBECCAJACKSONPGCAP**

<b>ABOUT ME</b>	<b>OPTIONAL MODULE</b>	<b>OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE</b>	<b>DECLARATION</b>
<b>1) EDUCATIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>SEMANTICS E-PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>6) "SELL YOUR BARGAINS"</b>	
<b>THE LINGUISTICS TOOLBOX</b>	<b>2) TUTOR OBSERVATION</b>	<b>3) MENTOR OBSERVATION</b>	
<b>5) OBSERVING A PEER</b>	<b>4) PEER OBSERVATION</b>	<b>PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION</b>	
<b>DIGITAL STORYTELLING</b>	<b>GROUP FEEDBACK</b>		

**20 MAY** **Overall self-assessment**

I have now self-assessed the six assessed posts for my reflective blog. As part of the assessment criteria, we are asked to show deep reflection, to integrate the literature and discuss it critically, to consider the UK PSF, and to evidence our development in terms of practice.

I have rated my posts good to excellent based on the fact that I have engaged in

**THE LINGUISTICS TOOLBOX**

@sj2915 Fantastic, thank you :) 2 weeks ago

Apologies for lack of tweets / work on site - I unexpectedly had to move house but I shall be back on track shortly. 2 weeks ago

Excited to see what will happen with #allaboutlinguistics allaboutlinguistics.com - great idea, Sheffield! 2 weeks ago

Student linguistics links needed - students send us your useful Lx links to share with others on

Fig. 2: E-Portfolio non-formal

1 <http://www.wordpress.com>

Generic assessment criteria are used on the PGCAP based on: (i) demonstrating competence in the substantive area of the module (assessed against the modules intended learning outcomes and using the UK's Professional Standards Framework for teaching and learning in Higher Education<sup>2</sup>; (ii) engagement and critique of relevant, generic and subject-specific pedagogic literature; and (iii) critical reflection on one's learning and in relation to the criteria (i) and (ii). Participants are awarded either a pass or fail on each module completed, but level of attainment descriptors are also used to signify to the participant a more finely grained level of achievement, i.e. from pass (excellent) to pass (good) to pass and fail.

#### **4.1 The Pedagogic Rationale for the PGCAP Programme's Use of E-Portfolios**

The rationale for the design of the PGCAP programme and its use of the E-Portfolio focuses on a participatory pedagogy, in which the learners are actively engaged in their own learning, development and assessment. It also accords with communities of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) and socio-constructivist principles (Hodgson & Watland, 2004) in which the multi-dimensionality of viewpoints is applauded and recognised for enriching the communal experience, for new knowledge is possible when participant positions and voices are considered and reciprocally enriched (Roth, 2009).

The PGCAP E-Portfolio design concurs with Nkonge and Gueldenzoph's (2006) recommendations for the successful use of learning technologies. These recommendations include firstly encouraging contact between participants and tutors, as well as developing mutuality in reciprocity and cooperation among the participants.

Furthermore, the E-Portfolio design aligns with Ellis & Goodyear's (2010) principles for 'good learning' by encouraging active learning among participants as self-regulating active learners, capable of extending, increasing, deepening, and evaluating their own knowledge, as well as the giving of prompt feedback among the learning community. The design places an emphasis for time on both individual and collaborative, but always authentic tasks, for situated learning. The design is goal-oriented aspiring to communicate high expectations of participants, as well as to model respect for diverse ways of learning and diverse ways of representing evidence of learning and achievement.

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2 <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf>

Content	Discussion
14 Posts	61 Comments
16 Pages	55 Approved
1 Category	2 Pending
0 Tags	4 Spam

Fig. 3: Comments

Participation in the E-Portfolio communal activities is an essential aspect of engaging on the PGCAP. Communal activity is essential to test perspectives within a ‘safe’ environment, to discuss, and to compare ideas and information. But use of the E-Portfolio also includes individual activity or ‘doing’ eg in self-evaluation, active searching and sharing of sources, and in metacognition ie thinking critically about one’s own learning. We therefore aim to support active and self-regulated learning, but also a balance between individual agency and the value gained from true belonging to a learning community.

## 4.2 Procedures and Processes used on the PGCAP for E-Portfolio use

In this section, we briefly outline how the PGCAP E-Portfolios are designed, implemented and managed. We also describe how the assessment of elements of the E-Portfolio is undertaken, as an ongoing and integral element in the E-Portfolio building and use.

**Setting-up:** The E-Portfolio is set-up before the start of the programme by each of the participants themselves. Links to the E-Portfolio are made available within the institutional Virtual Learning Environment immediately after setting up the E-Portfolio to enable easier sharing and access for participants and tutors.

**Familiarisation:** A series of practical tasks are carried out during the PGCAP induction session, such as creating pages, posts, commenting but also adding images and links. Participants are encouraged to create an ‘about me’ page and share some information about themselves, their role and responsibilities.

**Personalisation:** The participants “own” the E-Portfolio space they have created and have the flexibility to personalise these, regarding the look and feel but also the structure.

**Public and/or private spaces:** Participants decide if they will make all or parts of their E-Portfolio publicly available or keep it private. There is, however, a requirement to provide access to the programme tutors via a generic login, as

well as to share the E-Portfolio with at least some of their peers. These peers can be members from their action learning set or from the cohort more generally. The tutors are given administrative access for the duration of the programme. After successful completion of the programme, the participants are asked to remove the tutor access and are encouraged to continue using the E-Portfolio for their further professional development.

**Feedback practice:** Tutors monitor progress made by participants but only provide feedback when asked. Feedback is inserted directly into the e-portfolio, as comments. The Wordpress app enables tutors to access portfolios via their phones to checking and provide feedback on the go. Some participants also use the app for mobile accessibility.

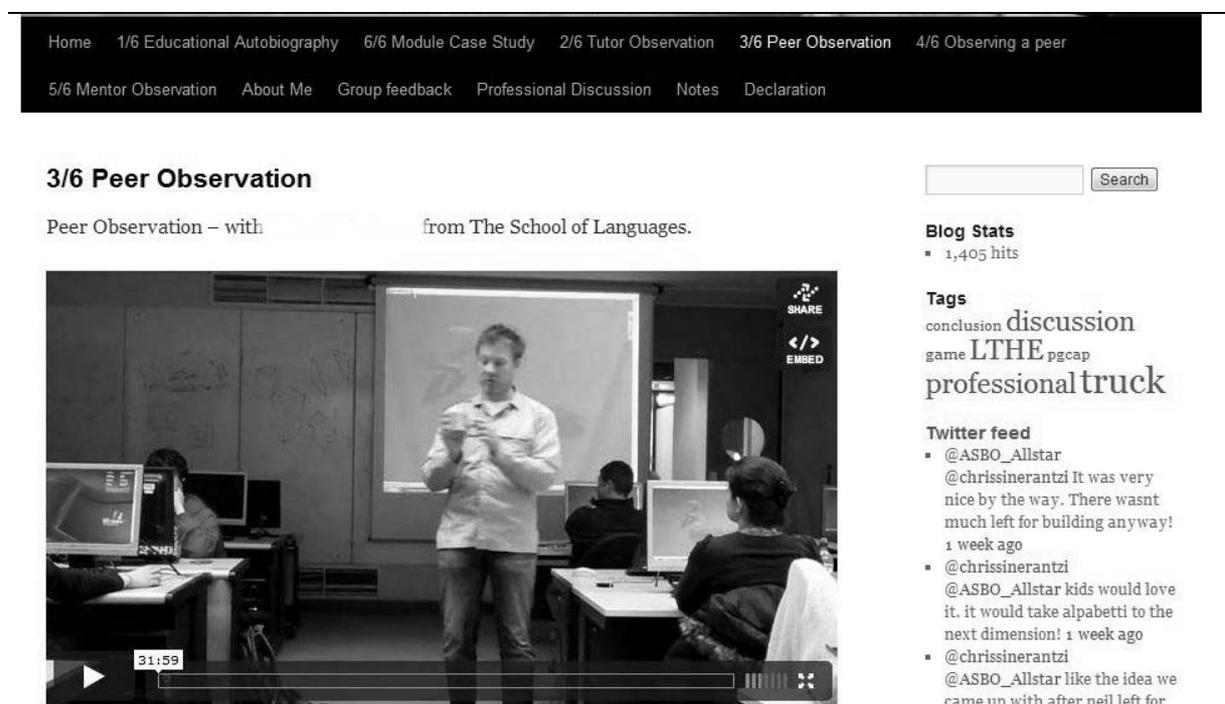


Fig. 4: Wordpress App

If a tutor identifies a difficulty (e.g. which might be linked to how a particular participant feels about their engagement with a specific module; or due to absence of evidence of engagement and/or reflections in the e-portfolio) they will quickly contact the participant to arrange a tutorial to discuss their concerns in confidence, offer support and resolve any issues as soon as possible, before these escalate further.

**Authenticity statement:** Participants are required to add a declaration page to their E-Portfolio stating that the work, included in the E-Portfolio for summative assessment, is authentic and their own.

**Assessment:** This is authentic and directly linked to participants' practice. Assessment is used to enable authentic, practice-based learning and critical reflection on that learning. The PGCAP assessment products include: an educational autobiography; a reflective journal; case studies; reports; and curriculum re-design activities. All assessment components across the programme are captured in the participant's E-Portfolio but they can be represented in a variety of formats including video and podcasts, as well as in text. The validity of the work presented in the E-Portfolio is further ensured by use of a professional discussion as well as the professional declaration statement.



The screenshot shows a navigation bar at the top with links: Home, 1/6 Educational Autobiography, 6/6 Module Case Study, 2/6 Tutor Observation, 3/6 Peer Observation (highlighted), and 4/6 Observing a peer. Below this is another row of links: 5/6 Mentor Observation, About Me, Group feedback, Professional Discussion, Notes, and Declaration. The main content area is titled '3/6 Peer Observation' and includes a video player showing a man in a white shirt presenting in a classroom. The video player has a progress bar at 31:59 and 'SHARE' and 'EMBED' icons. To the right of the video is a sidebar with a search box, 'Blog Stats' (1,405 hits), 'Tags' (discussion, LTHER, pgcap, professional truck), and a 'Twitter feed' with three tweets from @ASBO\_Allstar and @chrisinerantzi.

Fig. 5: Portfolio Assessment Video

**Marking procedures:** At the end of each module, the E-Portfolios are made available to module tutors for marking the assessment products. Marking is done electronically and assessment feedback is added online to the participant's declaration page. Due to the sensitive nature of assessment feedback, all summative feedback is private with only the tutor and the participant able to access this.

**Quality assurance:** Internal moderation commences immediately after completion of marking. External Examiners are also given access to a sample of E-Portfolios and all related documentation is shared with them electronically in advance of the programme's formal examination meeting.

## 5 Impact of E-Portfolio use on the Development of PGCAP participant Skills

The PGCAP programme team have used E-Portfolios to create innovative opportunities for ongoing engagement, learning, support and assessment as an integral aspect in learning. The team deliberately chose to use freely available social media, which are generally under-used within Academic Development activities. Participants not only have the opportunity to use social media as part of the programme, but also to develop a deeper understanding of how such technologies can be used effectively for student learning and assessment, by experiencing their use as a learner. The E-Portfolio is a variety of social media and participants have attested to having developed transferable skills. Participants have used their natural curiosity to engage in creative expression and active experimentation within a safe learning environment. They describe the experiences as having led them to new discoveries, realisation, change and learning around their professional practice. One tutor comments:

*“The portfolios seem well-formed and do have a ‘true’ portfolio feel in that participants have used them not as a repository for submitting work but to reflect on their learning throughout...”*

The use of the E-Portfolio for learning and formal assessment has had a huge impact on the development of skills among participants. The variety in module assessment tasks has been valued for enabling media-rich engagement and learning. One participant agreed stating:

*“Audio certainly does add another dimension and richness to the dialog and I can see why you have been keen to get people to try it out.”*

Self, peer and tutor assessments, combined with individual and group projects, are characteristics used from the outset and have been seen as valuable by participants and tutors for modelling a diverse range of immersive and relevant assessment experiences, as another participant commented:

*“It has really helped me to begin my journey as a reflective practitioner and really think and reflect on the impact my teaching has on my students. It has also helped me think about why I am teaching.”*

The majority of participants have not used social media before for learning and teaching and the programme gave them the opportunity to experience the use of social media for E-Portfolio building, and as a learner. This experience provided participants with a rich insight into potential uses for E-Portfolios, but

also more widely in the use of media such as audio, still and moving images, for learning and teaching. Some participants have started considering the use of E-Portfolios and more media-rich approaches with their own students and others have already implemented E-Portfolio interventions with their own students.

## **5.1 Dealing with the Constraints and Problems in E-Portfolio Use**

**Technological barriers:** The majority of PGCAP participants commence on the programme with only limited or no experience of using E-Portfolios. Therefore, their understanding of such online spaces and related tools is limited. This can make some feel frustrated and challenged. Additional support and guidance is often needed, both in advance of the programme but also during it, to explain how to use the E-Portfolio but also to help participants to add structure to their E-Portfolio and how they might capture their learning there. This support requires additional organisation and time by tutors, to minimise and remedy the impact of any technological barriers and to ensure all participants are fully able to participate. Self-study resources, as well as access to authentic E-Portfolios from previous cohorts, are also made available. A helpline discussion has also been set-up in the Blackboard VLE and participants are encouraged to use this to ask questions. In addition, tutorials and drop-in sessions are now arranged on a regular basis to offer extra support and guidance as needed. Support needs are most intense during the initial weeks of E-Portfolio use.

At the outset of the PGCAP, participants were able to select which E-Portfolio tool they would use. Now, we simply use Wordpress as our E-Portfolio tool. Using just one E-Portfolio tool for the whole programme has helped reduce support needs and tutor familiarisation with the system has been achieved over time. Participants and tutors have also become more experimental and adventurous in their use of the e-portfolio, including in the use of different media.

**Administration and Access:** All participants are required to add an administrator account to their E-Portfolio in order that the tutor team has full access to the E-Portfolio throughout duration of participation in the programme. In some modules, participants also add a specific module team account to their e-portfolio. This provision enables tutors to export the content of the E-Portfolios immediately after the formal submission date. The exported E-Portfolios are stored electronically within a central programme space. Some participants prefer to keep their E-Portfolios private, but it is a requirement of the programme to give access to (at least some) peers and tutors as some of the assessment tasks are peer-assessed and others include group-based, collaborative projects.

For tutors and programme administrators, keeping track of all E-Portfolios per cohort can be challenging. Current practice is that links to the E-Portfolios are

added to a table within the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment, which is the only way to bring all cohort E-Portfolios together in one place and make them accessible for tutors and peers.

**Assessment:** All assessment components presented in the E-Portfolio are completed progressively. There is a mix of in- and end-of module assessment components on all modules. As the E-Portfolios can be personalised, participants choose a structure to suit their needs. Participants are encouraged to capture evidence of their learning using a variety of media and often choose to be experimental. It is therefore not always easy to immediately identify the assessed components in an E-Portfolio and careful examination of its content may be required to locate the relevant components.

**Ongoing feedback:** Tutors have access to the E-Portfolios and monitor these closely and regularly. This approach has enabled tutors to identify any difficulties as they emerge and to organise additional tutorials or offer tailored support. Accessing and reviewing the E-Portfolios on a regular basis is time consuming for tutors and requires good concentration.

Feedback is however generally only provided when the tutor has been invited to comment. Sometimes there is confusion about this reactive approach, as participants might seek more tutorial direction and proactive support. Tutors have had to remind participants about the participatory pedagogy of the PGCAP, and the importance for self-regulation and learner agency. We are also mindful not to overload learners with feedback (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007).

**Assessment feedback:** Participants create a page in their E-Portfolio to declare the work included for assessment purposes is their own. Feedback is directly added by tutors, using the comment feature, throughout the module to guide the participant on how their work might be further improved.

At the end of the module, summative feedback is provided. This information is confidential and it would be insensible to be shared openly by the marker. Special care needs to be paid by tutors that the assessment feedback is provided as a comment, but unapproved, so that it is not visible to anybody else.

## **5.2 Adapting the Use of E-Portfolios for other HE Contexts: Some Points to Consider**

Using E-Portfolios for development and assessment as learning provides opportunities for rich conversations among tutors and learners that can extend learning beyond the classroom. There are a variety of E-Portfolio systems available today including paid services such as PebblePad and open source E-Portfolio platforms such as Mahara. Both of these systems are widely used at UK higher education institutions. Increasingly, tutors and institutions utilise freely available web-

based social media solutions, due to limited resources available and demands on staff to be resourceful and creative with less.

There can be a preference for using social media as E-Portfolio systems, which do not require technical expertise nor an institutional installation. This presents a real opportunity for tutors to be innovative and to experiment with different tools and approaches, but also presents challenges due to the likelihood of reliance on enthusiasts and experimenters (ie who are willing to take the risk with their students and try something different, to be innovative). Many times, such tutors invest large amounts of their own time implementing interventions with limited or no technical help or systematic support from their institution. Being left to troubleshoot on one's own is neither expedient nor rational. Many times, support comes from being part of an increasingly active community of educators who assist each other. Social networks have helped bring such individuals and group closer together to act as peer support networks.

It will be important to identify precisely how the use of the E-Portfolio might enable learning, and assessment as a form of learning. Tutors must pay special attention to go beyond the use of the E-Portfolio as purely a digital repository. They need instead to design the E-Portfolio within a pedagogical framework that encourages students to use it as a media-rich personal and collaborative learning space: to capture elements of and reflections on their learning, but also to connect with peers and tutors and use the portfolio as evidence of engagement in summative assessment.

Learners need help to become familiar with use of the e-portfolio. One participant on the PGCAP commented:

*“I feel more compelled to learn and participate in environments, which are friendly and inviting. It stops feeling like school and becomes more of a social event.”*

A staff development session can be offered to help participants attune to the conceptual frame in how the use of the E-Portfolio has been designed as an integral aspect of the programme. Participants also need to develop the relevant skills to use the features and functionality of the E-Portfolio technology in order to use it effectively. It is prudent to make additional self-study resources available in the institutional VLE. A helpline discussion can also be set-up, which participants use to ask questions. In addition, tutorials and drop-in sessions might be arranged to offer extra support and guides as needed. Support needs are likely most intense during the first weeks of E-Portfolio use.

Active engagement with peers and tutors through social media such as an E-Portfolio needs to be premised also on principles of good learning. Learners need to recognise a value and purpose in engaging in online communities, that

their learning can be enriched through perspective sharing and critique as essential aspects of collaborative activities. Building collaborative activities also into the formal assessment tasks can create extrinsic motivation for engagement in online discourse.

Taking a staged approach to development and presentation of the formal assessment components can promote assessment as learning and also help ensure regular participation. It can enable opportunities for formative but critical review in self-, peer- and tutor-based feedback on progression and achievements.

## **6 Conclusion**

The educational design and implementation of the E-Portfolio within PGCAP programme has been mindful to align closely with good learning. The design requires the learner to be active and instrumental in their own learning and to regard the assessments as an integral aspect of their learning. The E-Portfolio development involves the learner in interactions with their own thinking, with peers and with tutors. Learning is extensive and situated by involving participants in developing products or artefacts to evidence their learning, drawn from their own authentic practice, experiences and experimentations. The tasks expected of participants are designed to be both challenging and cumulative, building upon experiences and promoting a continuously critiqued understanding. And there are goals to be achieved in completion of the tasks and activities, leading to tangible achievements and reward with the PGCAP.

But this is not to regard our design as fixed and perfected. We too need to be reflective, connected and aspire to a creative approach. Thus, we continue the social engineering work involved in both configuring (as tutors) and co-configuring (with learners) the E-Portfolio as a learning place (Ellis & Goodyear, 2010) informed from feedback and an engaged discussion for community-wide ongoing knowledge building and continuing professional development.

The persisting traces of learner feedback e.g. in artefacts, logs, online traces and from group processes create a learning loop of feedback for the incremental design of an E-Portfolio system. Feedback enables the quality of the educational design of the E-Portfolio to steadily improve over time. Having a sharp sense of good learning makes it easier to prioritise areas for improvement and to feed into the iterative and adaptive design. Tutors will rarely think they get the design right the first time – rather it needs the process of use, feedback, redesign and reuse (Ellis & Goodyear, 2010) to elaborate and refine effective uses for E-Portfolios.

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