Strengthening IT assisted teaching:
ePortfolio use for teaching staff in higher education

Final report 2015
Extension Grant ID11-2041

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ePortfolioAssist project website web link

Support for the production of this report has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

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Acknowledgements

The project leader and the team members acknowledge their institutions’ support for the project, particularly through their in-kind contributions. The participants of the webinars and workshops, who showed a commitment to ongoing professional development and a concern for their students’ engagement in learning are also acknowledged. The project leader and team members also extend thanks to the professional staff at the four participating institutions who aided in the project’s implementation.
## List of acronyms used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eP</td>
<td>ePortfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USYD</td>
<td>The University of Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU</td>
<td>Charles Sturt University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSW</td>
<td>The University of New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>University of Canberra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part One: Achievements Statement

The project extended the findings and output of the original project (ID 11--2041) by furthering professional development for university staff using ePortfolios within their teaching practices. This was achieved through production of, and participation in, a series of workshops and webinars. Producing additional material for the project website, ePortfolioAssist (http://www.eportfolioassist.com.au/), in the form of four case study video clips demonstrating best practice, also increased the potential audience and influence of the professional development. These short video case studies illustrate a range of good practices in teaching and student learning outcomes in ePortfolio environments across a range of disciplines in higher education.

As noted in Chapter 2 and outlined in Appendix B, the project’s output included a series of six (6) webinar presentations, four (4) associated workshops, two (2) publications and two (2) conference presentations. Further development of the ePortfolioAssist website was a significant outcome of the project, particularly through its potential to reach a wide and diverse audience on a publicly accessible website via the Internet.

Three (3) project team members presented a well--received workshop titled “ePortfolio use and pedagogy to find your point of difference” at the ePortfolios Australia Forum in Perth September 30, 2015. A presentation at the National ASCILITE (Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education) Conference in December 2016 will mark the culmination the project, as the project website and all findings are presented to a globally recognised and professionally connected community of professionals and academics working in fields associated with enhancing learning and teaching through the pedagogical use of technologies. Further presentations and publications are in preparation for 2016 along with external grant applications to continue the research and discussion of ePortfolio as a pedagogical tool for enhanced student learning in Australian higher education.
Part Two: Executive summary

For many teaching staff in higher education ePortfolios are an innovation. Literature on ePortfolios recognizes them as beneficial to teaching practice, pedagogical thinking, curriculum design, and implementation of teaching strategies across a broad range of disciplines. They are, therefore, a means of strengthening IT-­‐assisted teaching, and of providing an effective way to encourage students’ learning.

This extension project provided a process and tangible outcomes for introducing and extending university teaching staff use of ePortfolio, through offering professional development training and support as teachers continued to integrate portfolio work into their pedagogical practices. This need for professional development and training was uncovered by the original project’s investigation (ID 11---2041) and is essential if this digital artefact is to be effectively embedded into pedagogical practice in higher education. The project addressed institutional policies on and practices in ePortfolio work as these related to staff activities in a number of institutions.

This project built on the original project’s many outcomes, through furthering professional development for staff use and producing a vast amount of additional research material for the project website --- ePortfolioAssist.com.au. --- an open source website that provides practical assistance with designing and using ePortfolios in higher education for staff, students, educational designers and institutional policy makers. The extension grant project’s funding has enabled the site to address broader, non---specific audiences than the early---intended Creative and Performing Arts  audience.
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*Strengthening IT assisted teaching: ePortfolio use for teaching staff in higher education*
Part Three: Narrative
Chapter 1: Aims, background and approach

This project aimed to extend the findings and impact of the completed project “ePortfolios for creative arts, music and arts students in Australian universities” (ID 11---2041). This project was conducted between November 2011 and April 2014 at four Australian universities, and documented the impact of student electronic portfolio use on teaching and learning in music and other creative and performing arts. Researchers from Curtin University, Griffith University, the University of Sydney, and the University of Western Sydney used and evaluated ePortfolios in their teaching of Arts students. In so doing, they investigated the effects of ePortfolios on students, their identities, and the enhancement of learning in a technology environment, and reported the impact on teachers and their responses to teaching through the use of ePortfolios (Blom, Rowley, Bennett, Hitchcock & Dunbar---Hall, 2013). As a result of the original OLT funded project, ePortfolio practices to support and enhance quality learning and teaching were defined, refined and validated.

This current extension grant project aimed to shift the focus of the original project’s activity from creative and performing arts students’ use of ePortfolios to a broader application of enhancing ePortfolio use by non-discipline specific teaching staff in higher education. It aimed to embed and apply outcomes of the completed project (ID 11--2041) by incorporating significant findings (such as effective teaching skills) and products (such as the ePortfolioAssist website) into university policies and teaching practices. It also aimed to establish the potential for a broad application of ePortfolio use by higher education teachers by offering a series of professional development events (webinars, professional development workshops, review meetings) for staff in Australian higher education.
Chapter 2: Literature review and method

Literature Review
Research on ePortfolios is strongly represented from writers in Britain and the US, but with regular contribution from researchers in Australia, Canada, Europe, and Scandinavia – all locations where educational technology is well established and economically supported, and where its use is an expectation of education systems (Brooks & Rowley, 2013). Alongside discussion of ePortfolios in generic research publications for education, investigation of ePortfolios has become the topic of dedicated journals, professional associations, conferences, and web sites. The literature surrounding the study of ePortfolios in universities has covered a range of conceptual areas, including their framing as a site of learning (Stefani et al., 2007; Akcil & Arap, 2009); their role in the encouragement of student reflection on learning (Doig et al., 2006); their potential within areas of identity development and definition (McAlpine, 2005); their implications for institutional bodies (Joyes, et al., 2010); their use within peer assessment (Stevenson, 2006); and their role as a current technology for social and educational networking among university students who are adept users of social media such Facebook and LinkedIn (Oliver & Goerke, 2007; Hemmi et al., 2009; Gray et al., 2010). These outcomes of investigating ePortfolios and their relevance to tertiary education formed the foundations for this project’s momentum and research direction of professional development for teaching staff in Australian higher education.

Method
The project’s research design was qualitative, allowing a focus on the description of contexts that arise from situated problems in the field, and highlighting the importance of contextual information in the collection and analysis of data (Tracy, 2013). Naturalistic and interpretive in nature, qualitative research enabled inquiry using multiple empirical materials (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), including “case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts, and cultural texts and productions”, each capable of “making the world visible in a different way” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, pp. 3–4).

Case studies were of particular significance in the research design through their capacity to focus on relationships and processes occurring in natural settings, and their flexibility in allowing data collection to be tailored to the requirements of the research questions (Meyer, 2001). A series of video case studies within the project allowed for the development of deep understanding of an issue in its natural context and allowing the researcher to understand ‘how’ and ‘why’ a certain phenomenon occurs (Crowe et al. 2011).

As the study aimed to build upon the original project’s (ID 11--2041) findings and outputs, the participants were selected purposively for their capacity to provide data to this end. University staff utilising ePortfolios within their teaching across diverse content areas were selected.
Chapter 3: Significance and innovation – conclusions and learning outcomes

The project developed and ran a series of six (6) practical online interactive workshops and professional learning conversations. These were run by the project team as conversation facilitators with teaching staff at the four participating institutions and with members of a wider community of ePortfolio users from the ePortfolios Australia network and PebblePad Google group. The practical online professional development forums were offered in a webinar, and four (4) of the webinars were complemented by one (1) review meeting and one (1) training session workshop for teaching staff in the four (4) higher education institutions.

The six (6) practical online professional development forums were offered in a webinar format for teaching staff and any other interested parties to enhance the sharing, innovation, and adoption of teaching and learning strategies associated with ePortfolio use. The recipients of the professional development were teaching staff from a broad range of discipline areas including the medical sciences, teacher education, business, law and professional staff from the University library.

The webinars covered a range of aspects of ePortfolio use (see Appendix 1), and were posted to the “ePortfolios for Arts” YouTube channel. This channel now has 19 video clips related to both the initial and extension projects. With viewer numbers of up to 75 per video clip, the project’s impact and outreach can be seen to be expanding.

The four (4) associated face to face review meetings and professional development workshops held at the University of Sydney, the University of New South Wales, the University of Canberra and Charles Sturt University (Wagga Wagga & Albury) gave teachers and institutional leaders an opportunity to explore the assessment and curriculum issues specific to their institution. In addition, there was an Introductory and developmental online session for CSU staff who were using PebblePad – the CSU institutional ePortfolio platform. The staff training session was established for those who were considering using PebblePad in their teaching for semester 2, 2015. In particular, the session focused on the creation and use of some of the smaller valuable tools within the platform, as well as assembling more complicated items like web folios and blogs.

The four (4) video case studies created by three of the participating institutions allowed experienced teaching staff to present the HOW and WHY they use ePortfolios in their specific disciplines. These case studies are housed on the project’s website and provide a first hand response to how teaching staff have approached the implementation of the ePortfolio practice and process in their discipline and managed the challenges and opportunities faced when any innovative pedagogical tool is embedded into curriculum.
References


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Appendix A

Certification

Certification by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent)

I certify that all parts of the final report for this OLT grant provide an accurate representation of the implementation, impact and findings of the project, and that the report is of publishable quality.

Name: Professor Pip Pattison DVC (Education) Date: 23/11/2015

NB: There is a separate certification document uploaded to OLT portal and emailed to OLT with the financial acquittal document.
Appendix B

Project promotional materials/workshop presentations

Webinar presentations

A series of six (6) webinar presentations were held. Four (5) were followed by one (1) **review meeting** and one (1) **training session** for teaching staff in the three (3) named beneficiary higher education institutions.

*Table 1. Online interactive webinars*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title of Online Interactive Workshops Webinar</th>
<th>Hosting University</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 14, 2015</td>
<td>“ePortfolio practice and enhanced learning for Australian tertiary students”</td>
<td>USYD</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 9, 2015</td>
<td>“Strengthening IT assisted teaching and learning for staff using ePortfolio with Australian tertiary students”</td>
<td>UNSW</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 9, 2015</td>
<td>“Planning for using ePortfolio in a discrete unit of study: exploring assessment and evidence”</td>
<td>UC</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 24, 2015</td>
<td>“Basics of Pebblepad and a bit more”</td>
<td>CSU (Albury)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 24, 2015</td>
<td>“Approaches to embedding ePortfolio across a course of study”</td>
<td>CSU (Wagga Wagga)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 30, 2015</td>
<td>“Building and creating an individual learning story for students through the Johari Window”</td>
<td>CSU (Albury)</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 This planned webinar had not take place prior to the date of report submission.

**Strengthening IT assisted teaching: ePortfolio use for teaching staff in higher education**
Workshops

Complementary to the webinars, a series of workshops were held wherein staff at the participating university were able to discuss ePortfolio use, potential for teaching, and associated challenges within their specific institutional settings. Although one workshop was initially planned for each of the participating universities, catering to the multi-campus nature of CSU resulted in delivery of a total of five (5), rather than four (4) workshops.

Table 2. Complementary professional development workshops and review meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title of Workshop</th>
<th>Hosting University</th>
<th>Review meeting and training session</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 22, 2015</td>
<td>“ePortfolio practice and enhanced learning for Australian tertiary students”</td>
<td>USYD</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 9, 2015</td>
<td>“Strengthening IT assisted teaching and learning for staff using ePortfolio with Australian tertiary students”</td>
<td>UNSW</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 9, 2015</td>
<td>“Planning for using ePortfolio in a discrete unit of study: exploring assessment and evidence”</td>
<td>UC</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 24, 2015</td>
<td>“Approaches to embedding ePortfolio across a course of study”</td>
<td>CSU (Wagga Wagga)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 30, 2015²</td>
<td>“Building and creating an individual learning story for students through the Johari Window”</td>
<td>CSU (Albury)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Website

A significant outcome of the original project (ID 11--2041) was a community open source discussion space for exchanging information about ePortfolios among the wider public (http://www.capaeportfolios.ning.com). This site was utilised during the extension project’s implementation as a place for developing an ePortfolio community of practice.

² This planned workshop and review meeting had not take place prior to the date of report submission.
In addition, the eportfolioassist.com.au website was significantly developed and enhanced with new material such as academic papers, feedback from professional development sessions and four new case studies. These short video case studies (shown in table, below) were created as part of this extension project to illustrate a range of good practices in teaching and student learning outcomes in ePortfolio environments across a range of disciplines in Australian higher education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study 1</th>
<th>ePortfolio teaching and learning practice by academics in a music faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 2</td>
<td>Approaches to embedding ePortfolio across a dietetics course of study at the University of Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 3</td>
<td>Strengthening reflective practice through the UNSW Medical Sciences: Story of ePortfolio work from a teacher/staff development perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study 4</td>
<td>ePortfolio in a Teacher education Program: exploring assessment and evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Journal articles**

The following articles to be submitted to:

*Journal of Further and Higher Education* — “Strengthening IT assisted teaching and learning for staff using ePortfolio with Australian tertiary students”

*Journal of Reflective Practice* — “Effective skills in teaching reflective practice for ePortfolio through images”

**Conference presentations/submissions**

- ePortfolios Australia Forum in Perth September 30, 2015
  “ePortfolio use and pedagogy to find your point of difference”
The following presentation is to be submitted for conference in 2016.

- ASCILITE (Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education) in December 2016

“Teaching reflective portfolio practice through the Johari window”