

Documenting Learning with ePortfolios

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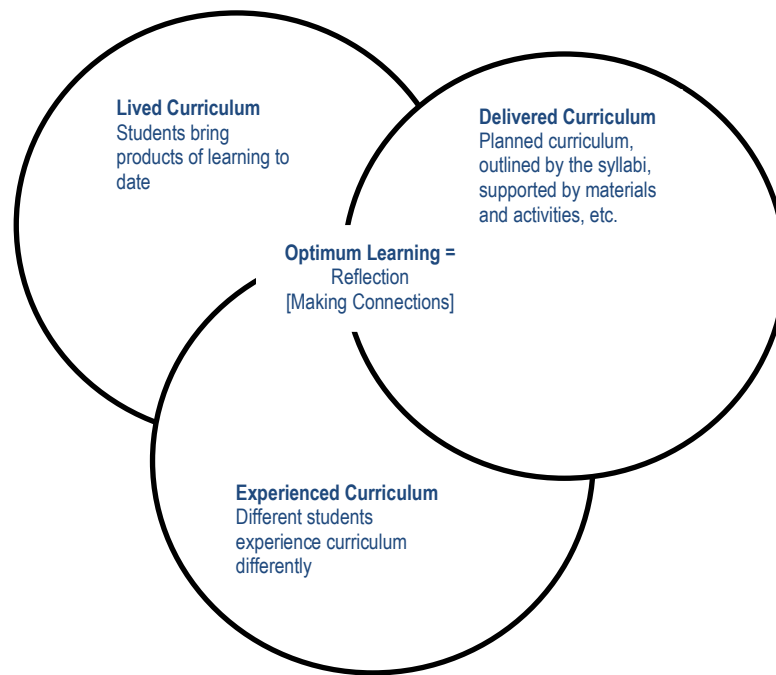
“Introduction”

Critical Issues for ePortfolios and Student Success	The Framework: Steps and Guiding Questions
1. Defining learning outcomes	<i>Defining Learning Outcomes:</i> What are the learning outcomes for your ePortfolio initiative? What types of learning do you want to capture and document?
2. Understanding your learners 3. Identifying stakeholders	<i>Understanding Learners and Identifying Stakeholders:</i> Who are your stakeholders, especially your learners (the people who will be creating and using the ePortfolio)? How can they benefit from ePortfolios (i.e., what are their needs)? What can they contribute to and how can they support an ePortfolio effort?
4. Designing learning activities	<i>Designing Learning Activities:</i> Given your outcomes, what activities can you design to best guide the ways that learners use the ePortfolio to document their learning? How will their learning be captured and documented in the ePortfolio? How can the artifacts and evidence that are captured be organized, connected, and shared in meaningful and integrated ways?
5. Using rubrics to evaluate ePortfolios 6. Anticipating external uses of evidence	<i>Informing Assessment of Student Learning:</i> How do the ePortfolios and their artifacts inform assessment of student learning? In other words, what evidence results from how learners document their achievements and competencies? How can rubrics be used to support ePortfolio assessment?
7. Including multiple forms of evidence	<i>Using ePortfolio Tools and Technologies:</i> Which ePortfolio tools and technologies will allow you to collect the types of evidence that will allow learners to document and demonstrate their learning? What additional resources are need (e.g. IT support) for your initiative to succeed?
8. Evaluating the impact of ePortfolios	<i>Evaluating the Impact of Your ePortfolio Initiative:</i> What kinds of evidence would validate the investment of time and resources to ePortfolios to all stakeholders? In other words, how might the documentation of learning collected in ePortfolios be used by other stakeholders on your campus (i.e. in accreditation efforts)? How will you evaluate whether or not your ePortfolio initiative was a success?

- Pedagogy must lead the technology.
- *Strategy for determining outcomes:* Imagine that your ePortfolio project is completed and that it succeeded in all of its goals. You are to appear tomorrow at a press conference to explain what you have accomplished. Write a press release to distribute at this meeting, explaining in a few paragraphs what it is that you have accomplished, who is benefiting from ePortfolios, why there are important tools for documenting learning (what problem does their use solve and why did it need to be solved in the first place?), and what it was that you did that led to or caused this success.

1. “Why Document Learning?”

- Learners need to document what they know, reflect on their knowledge, and present that knowledge to specific audiences to learn deeply.
- Students should follow a mastery orientation to learning, rather than a performance goal orientation.
- Learners need to understand what they know and are able to do but, more important, *how* they know what they know in addition to what they do not know, as a way of strategizing where to learn next.
- “ePortfolios provide a lens for examining these questions and a means to put the answers into practice.”



- **Folio Thinking:** “Folio thinking is a reflective practice that situates and guides the effective use of learning portfolios. Drawing upon the literature in experiential learning, metacognition, reflective and critical thinking, mastery orientations to learning, and, of course, learning portfolios, folio thinking aims to encourage students to integrate discrete learning experiences, enhances their self-understanding, promote taking responsibility for their own learning, and support them in developing an intellectual identity.”
- *Developmental Foundations of Learning Outcomes*
 - Epistemological Foundation: View knowledge as contextual. Develop an internal belief system via constructing, evaluating, and interpreting judgments in light of available frames of reference.
 - Intrapersonal Foundation: Choose own values and identity in crafting an internally generated sense of self that regulates interpretation of experience and choices.
 - Interpersonal Foundation: Capacity to engage in authentic, interdependent relationships with diverse others in which self is not overshadowed by a need for others’ approval, mutually negotiating needs, and genuinely taking others’ perspectives into account without being consumed by them.
 - Self-authorship: Capacity to internally define a coherent belief system and identity that coordinates mutual relationships with others.
- **Workspace/Academic/Community through ePortfolios**
 - Transfer Academic to Workspace through Making Connections
 - Research
 - Critical Thinking
 - PowerPoint Presentations
 - Transfer Community to Academics through Making Connections
 - Reflections } Community
 - Experiences } Community
 - Grades } Academics
 - Feedback } Academics
 - Assignments } Academics
 - Reflections } Academics
 - Transfer Workspace to Community through Making Connections
 - Team Work
 - Project Management
 - Experiences

2. “A Stakeholder’s Approach to Documenting Learning”

- Stake holders: ePortfolio owner/learners; parents/family/friends/guardians; career development centers; employers, internships, coordinators; funders; centers for teaching and learning; study abroad staff and faculty; IT, board of trustees; senior administrators, president, provost; other students and peers; assessment and institutional research; international students; advisors/mentors; libraries; faculty/instructors/department chairs; other institutions (2 yr/4yr, graduate schools, professional schools); members of the community, mentors, supervisors; office of development/fundraising; alumni; admissions officers; registrars; student affairs, diversity/multicultural affairs, public service
 - Students: as the owners and creators of the content of the ePortfolio, students are the most critical stakeholders in any ePortfolio initiative
 - Faculty: as the creators of the curriculum and the designers of the ePortfolio experience, define and establish the expectations and the culture of ePortfolio practice
 - Academic Leaders: academic leaders, including department chairs and deans, provide leadership and support for the ePortfolio project but also have their own stakeholders to whom they answer
 - Administrators: Similar to academic leaders, presidents, provosts, and other key administrators will have varying interests in the kinds of evidence that ePortfolios can produce to inform, for example, for example, accreditation efforts, institutional research, and external funders and boards of trustees.
 - Student Affairs: career development centers, public and community service organizations, residential education advising and mentoring services, and other extracurricular and co-curricular organizations share a more holistic view of students beyond the confines of the classroom. As a division, student affairs experts can be great partners and resources in any ePortfolio initiative.
 - Staff: faculty developers, academic technologists, instructional designers, library staff, and campus registrars have valuable knowledge and experience to contribute to training, support, logistics, and long term vision of how ePortfolios can be integrated, scaled, and sustained within the university environment
 - Assessment Experts: assessment experts who are involved in department and program reviews, institutional research, and committees preparing for accreditation or external credentialing can also play a key role

- Mindsets
 - Show don’t tell: communicate the vision in an impactful and meaningful way by creating experiences using illustrative visuals and telling good stories
 - Craft clarity: produce a coherent vision out of messy problems. Frame it in a way to inspire others to fuel ideation.
 - Be mindful of process: it is important to know where you are in the design process, what methods to use in that stage, and what your goals are
 - Collaborate across boundaries: bringing together innovators with varied backgrounds and viewpoints.
 - Bias toward action: design thinking is a misnomer. It is more about doing than thinking. Bias toward doing and making, over thinking and meeting.
 - Embrace experimentation: prototyping is not simply a way to validate an idea, it is an integral part of the innovation process. “We build to think and learn.”
 - Focus on human values: empathy for the people for whom the ePortfolio is being designed; feedback from these users is fundamental to good design.

3. “Designing Effective ePortfolio Learning Activities”

- High impact educational practices make connections among learning experiences.
- Dee Fink’s taxonomy of significant learning
 - Learning How to Learn
 - Becoming a better student
 - Inquiring about a subject
 - Self-directing learners
 - Foundational Knowledge: understanding and remembering
 - Information
 - Ideas
 - Application
 - Skills
 - Thinking: critical, creative, and practical thinking
 - Managing projects
 - Integration: Connecting:
 - Ideas
 - People
 - Realms of life
 - Human Dimension: Learning about
 - Oneself
 - Others
 - Caring: Developing new:
 - Feelings
 - Interests
 - Values

Steps to a Model ePortfolio: (Nancy Wozniak and Sourav Tamang)

1. **Think about your work and experiences. Choose the best.** You want to assemble a collection of works that demonstrate and showcase your talents and abilities in all areas of your life. You’re talented. Let the world know. An ePortfolio will help as you transition from your academic career to applying for graduate school and searching for a job in your chosen professional field. Your ePortfolio gives you dimension. An ePortfolio that is designed for external or professional review is very different from a personal, developmental ePortfolio that might contain work in progress and exploration of possible majors and careers. Many ePortfolio tools allow students to create either different views or even completely independent ePortfolios that are tailored to specific audiences (such as a prospective employer, graduate school, family, and friends).
2. **You MUST have an About Me or Bio category.** Composing your About Me doesn’t have to be a long, painful process. The value of the introductory About Me page is not to be underestimated. A simple photo along with some background information can go a long way to connect a faculty member or employer with who a student is.
3. **Categorize, Post, and Display** your showcase assignments, projects, activities, and experiences (known as “artifacts”). Relating back to the first point, over the course of an academic term or even across an undergraduate learning career, students will amass a collection of artifacts. Many ePortfolio tools have features such as tagging or visualization tools that can help the ePortfolio owners organize their artifacts so that they can be selective in deciding which artifacts to feature, depending on the audience.
4. **Check your grammar.** Poor grammar and sentence structure take away from your creative and professional image. Think about your impression of the author of a paper riddled with spelling errors and broken sentence structure. Keep your writing conversational and grammatically correct. Use a spell checker. Have a buddy proofread your writing. You’ll improve your writing style when you read others’ writing. Like the following point about appropriate media, this recommendation about grammar and language emphasizes keeping in mind the potential audience viewing this ePortfolio and what conclusions they may draw about you from your ePortfolio.
5. **Add Media.** Images and video make your ePortfolio interesting and invite others to browse and read about your work. This isn’t Facebook. This is a professional representation of you. Keep the media professional. Ask yourself, can I show this image to a future employer or my mom? Both points 4 and 5 emphasize the professional nature of a learning ePortfolio that carries the name and logo of their college or university.

Unlike a personal web site or blog, the “brand” of the institution does carry some recognition and credibility that could differentiate this student from others who do not have a formal ePortfolio.

6. **Reflect!** This is the final and most important step. When you take the time to post a reflection on an artifact showcased in your ePortfolio, you demonstrate your reasoning and critical thinking abilities. You show deeper levels of your communication, creative, and leadership abilities. Your reflection shows a higher order of thinking on your part. Reflection completes the metacognitive process (making sense, self-analysis, and reflection. . .thinking about how you think) and helps you to make connections between learning and growth experiences in all areas of your life. Let’s face, it, posted reflections are impressive and allow others to view your multifaceted talents and abilities. After all, your ePortfolio is the best of you and you’re amazing! When writing a reflection on an assignment or learning experience, keep it simple, it doesn’t need to be an essay. Ask yourself one or two of these reflection prompts about your assignment, course, project, program, or experience.

- What did you learn?
- What about this assignment or program was most useful to you?
- What would you recommend to others about getting involved in this project or program? What suggestions would you offer?
- What areas in your life was strengthened or improved by the project or program?
- List the ways you have grown as a result of this assignment, course, or program.
- What problems did you encounter? What risks did you take?
- What experience in this program or assignment of this course demonstrated your strengths and talents and why?
- If you had it to do all over again, would you? Why?

Although reflection is a separate step here, it is also implicit in the folio thinking process of creating an ePortfolio. Certainly, reflective prompts are a useful guide for students who are new to the folio thinking culture but recognize that reflection is an inherent and essential aspect of the entire process of ePortfolio creation.

7. **To receive full recognition of your model ePortfolio**, you must have your ePortfolio and the key categories set to Public View, such as, Welcome, About Me, Showcase Artifacts (course assignments, projects, activities, programs) with Reflections, CV or Resume. You know not to reveal too much about yourself. Show your talents, strengths, and abilities without posting personal identifiers and information. Many ePortfolio tools have various permission settings for the ePortfolio with the basic premise being that students own the ePortfolio and they decide with whom they want to share their ePortfolio. Certainly, if an ePortfolio is part of a course then the student would be required to share it with the instructor and possibly their classmates. The above suggestion acknowledges that some students, in spite of their familiarity with technology, will still need guidance as to what’s appropriate and not appropriate to share in their professional learning ePortfolio.

Levels of Mapping Individual, Departmental, and Institutional Goals and Outcomes

- Artifacts
- Class objectives
- Department/program objectives } Program assessment review cycle
Workforce (employer) needs
- College goals
- Institutional goals and objectives } Strategic plan goals
Graduation requirements } GE content objectives
Campus learning outcomes
- System and national goals

Assessment of Learning

- Purpose prescribed
- Artifacts mandated and scored for external use
- Organized by the instructor/teacher
- Summative (past to present)
- Institution-centered
- Requires extrinsic motivation
- Positivist

Assessment for Learning

- Purpose negotiated
- Artifacts chosen by learner and feedback provided back to learner
- Organized by the learner
- Formative (present to future)
- Student-centered
- Intrinsically motivating
- Constructivist