

## Eportfolios and Assessment



### 1. Pedagogy

When considering the use of eportfolios for assessment it is important to understand the underlying pedagogy which matches the software. The eportfolio software Mahara (Myportfolio) is consistent with a social constructivist pedagogical foundation. Anderson & Dron (2011) provide a useful summary of social constructivism:

“Although there are many types of social constructivism (see Kanuka & Anderson, 1999), all the models have more or less common themes, including the importance of

1. new knowledge as building upon the foundation of previous learning,
2. context in shaping learners’ knowledge development,
3. learning as an active rather than passive process,
4. language and other social tools in constructing knowledge,
5. metacognition and evaluation as a means to develop learners’ capacity to assess their own learning,
6. learning environment as learner-centred and stressing the importance of multiple perspectives,
7. knowledge needing to be subject to social discussion, validation, and application in real world contexts (from Honebein, 1996; Jonassen, 1991; Kanuka & Anderson, 1999).”

So this means that Myportfolio has a number of features that align with these themes, for example:

- the eportfolio is student-centred, the student controls what is collected as evidence, who it is shared with, for how long, and what the other person can view (3) (6)
- there is a ‘friends’ role (like facebook) so students can interact with close associates (7)
- the eportfolio can be used for academic, employment-related and vocational certification purposes (7)
- it is easy to share and comment on pages with peers, tutors, lecturers and other eportfolio account holders outside the University (3) (4) (6)
- the journal tool provides an opportunity to reflect on the learning that is evidenced by the artefacts displayed on the page (5)
- the range of artefacts including reflection on evidence of learning can show progression in learning over a longer period of time and more comprehensively than a single assignment (1)
- different pages can be contextualised for different purposes e.g. practicum report cf. human development assignment (2)

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### 2. Assignment Types that suit an eportfolio



Using an eportfolio simply as a way for students to create a library collection of single large assignment files is a very basic use of this versatile tool which does **not** take advantage of the capabilities of the software.

Single task large assignments (e.g. essays) may be required as part of an assessment requirement for a paper but generally speaking are less suitable for eportfolio use. They will be more easily processed using a Moodle assignment dropbox, or some other submission process which can include integrated Turnitin plagiarism checking.

To take advantage of the strengths of an eportfolio, consider designing assignments which incorporate some of the following elements:

- multiple resources of rich digital media (e.g. audio, video, graphic, text) that the student can assemble and comment on
- rubrics used to assess across a range of criteria

- peer or tutor/lecturer formative feedback as part of the assignment process
- students reflect on the evidence of learning they have selected or created
- has a real world context (e.g. link to work experience or teaching practicum experience)
- can be mapped to long-term vocational capabilities (e.g. Graduating Teacher Standards, professional association requirements)
- can be mapped to the graduate profile capabilities of the qualification being studied

Some types of assignments which take advantage of the affordances of eportfolio software are:

**Group work assignments** involving collaborative learning and critical evaluation, with tasks allocated for each group member requiring discussion and consultation before a final 'product' using a range of text items and other media is submitted

**Learning journals** which encourage an ongoing personal connection with learning and link theory to practice in relation to the students' knowledge and experience - this type of assignment helps develop the reflective practice necessary in many professions including teaching

**Field work/practicum reports** – such as practicum placements in a relevant workplace – these provide a rich source of learning in an authentic context and an eportfolio provides a useful way of gathering a range of evidence which shows what learning has occurred during the practicum placement

**Problem-solving assignments** - these focus on an issue or challenge relevant to the field of knowledge and allow the student to suggest multiple solutions, evaluate solutions and recommend and justify a particular optimal solution for the problem

**Resource portfolios** – these are collections of a range of digital media resources found on the Internet focused on an issue or learning area, with evaluations of the efficacy of the resources and (if appropriate) examples of their use in an authentic context

## References

- Anderson, T., & Dron, J. (2011). Three generations of distance education pedagogy. *International Review of Research in Online and Distance Learning (IRRODL)*, 12(3), 80-97. Retrieved from <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/890>
- Kanuka, H., & Anderson, T. (1999). Using constructivism in technology-mediated learning: constructing order out of chaos in the literature. *Radical Pedagogy*1(2). Retrieved from [http://auspace.athabascau.ca/bitstream/2149/728/1/Using%20Constructivism%20in%20Technology-Mediated%20Learning\\_%20br\\_Constructing%20Order.pdf](http://auspace.athabascau.ca/bitstream/2149/728/1/Using%20Constructivism%20in%20Technology-Mediated%20Learning_%20br_Constructing%20Order.pdf)

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